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Marginal is Critical:

A Comparative Study of Marginal Workers in Britain and Hong Kong

by

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For Ying, with love



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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation represents my own work and that it had not been previously submitted to this University and any other institutions in application for a degree, diploma or other qualifications.

Mr. Hung Wong

March 1999

Abstract

This study explores the rise of marginal workers in Britain and Hong Kong after the Second World War and argues that marginal workers are not minor, unimportant, powerless and transient elements of capitalist development. Marginal workers, however, are important and indispensable to the development of capitalism in both regions. The work and life histories of marginal workers in Britain and Hong Kong show that gender and ethnic inequalities are articulated through and intensified by class inequality. The overlapping of these inequalities creates different subgroups of marginal workers.

The marginalisation of labour is the process of the identification and separation of marginal groups from mainstream society. With assistance from the state, capital has been able to increase its exploitation of and control over labour through intensified gender, ethnic, occupational and international divisions of labour.

This thesis argues that marginal is critical. A marginal class location induces a marginal class consciousness, which is a counter, non-conforming and cynical attitude towards oppression and exploitation. Nonetheless, while the consciousness of British marginal workers is more aggressive, radical and well-shaped, that of marginal workers in Hong Kong is more self-defensive, conservative and amorphous. This thesis suggests that these different patterns of marginal consciousness are a product of their distinctive class formation process: marginal workers in Britain have undergone a 'sedimentary' class formation, their counterparts in Hong Kong have undergone a 'disrupted' class formation.

The 'sedimentary class formation' of marginal workers in Britain is structured by its marginal trap of downward mobility and low geographical mobility at the macro level, alongside active shop-floor struggle and strong trade unionism at the meso level. The 'disrupted class formation' of marginal workers in Hong Kong is caused by its permeable class structure and covert class struggle, alongside the lack of shop-floor trade union organisers and experience of struggle.

Abbreviations

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CIDL	Changing International Division of Labour
CSSA	Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme
EPZs	Export Processing Zones
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEC	General Electric Company
GHS	General Household Survey
HK	Hong Kong
HKD	Hong Kong Dollars
HKFTU	Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JETRO	Japan External Trade Organisation
JIT	Just In Time
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IWA(GB)	Indian Workers Association (Great Britain)
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MNCs	Multinational Corporations
NI	National Insurance
NIDL	New International Division of Labour
NICs	Newly Industrilised Countries
NIEs	Newly Industrilised Economies
NUPE	National Union of Public Employees
OP	Outward Processing
SARs	Samples of Anonymised Records
SEG	Socio-Economic Group
TFCs	Transnational Financial Conglomerates
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
TNCs	Transnational Corporations
TQC	Total Quality Control
TUC	Trade Union Congress
UK	United Kingdom
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
USA	United States of America
VAT	Value Added Tax
YTS	Youth Training Scheme
ZJDR	Zhujiang Delta River Region

Chapter 1

Introduction

The government's claim that its policy of deregulation has expanded the job market does not stand up to serious scrutiny. Instead it has led to fear and insecurity at work among part-timers, those on short-term contracts and the self-employed.

John Monks (1995)

Marginalisation of Labour: A Global Trend

The marginalisation of labour¹ and the labour movement has become a significant and widespread global phenomenon since the 1980s. To labour, this marginalisation process is filled with *fear* and *insecurity* as suggested in the above remark by John Monks, the TUC chairman.² Fear and anger, sorrow and joy, resistance and acceptance, however, can be found among workers undergoing marginalisation in most countries of the world capitalist system, both East and West, North and South.

¹ For the definition of labour, I would adopt Cohen's version. Cohen (1987) states that, 'In general, the word "labour" has been used in two senses. The first as an abstract category – as in labour versus capital. The second as a collective noun, where qualified by an adjective. ... However, when quoting or summarising the views of conventional economists, "labour" is sometimes used in the sense of "labour-power". The usage of "labour market" (the market for labour-power) and "labour supply" (the supply of labourers) has also been retained.'

² Quoted in *Financial Times* 13/2/1995 p.7.

Marginalisation can be seen as the process of the identification and separation of marginal groups from mainstream society. It is the subordination of labour through its gender, ethnic, occupational and international divisions, usually with assistance from the state. Under such divisions of labour, the wage levels, working conditions and job security of marginal workers have deteriorated enormously. The marginalisation of labour also increases the authority of capital, which under the label of 'flexible management' cuts back the collective power of workers and their movements.

De-industrialisation and mass unemployment in the western capitalist countries have destroyed the bargaining power base of organised labour and enabled capital and the state to have unchecked authority to restructure the economy and to deregulate the labour market. Lash and Urry (1987) claim it is the end of 'organised' capitalism. There is only a partial truth in their argument that the main objective of capital is to eliminate 'rigidity' posed by organised labour and the welfare state, the pillar-stones of Fordism (Harvey 1987).³ However, this 'disorganising' process itself is well co-ordinated among capitalists themselves without any chaos. The employers are still well orchestrated behind the 'disorganised' scene of the post-Fordist era. They have the same micro objectives of increasing flexibility in their enterprises through restructuring or rationalisation.⁴ The essence of these strategies is to reduce

³ For a discussion of the difference between Fordism and post-Fordism see Harvey (1987) and Brehony (1995); Lipietz (1986) suggests another concept, 'peripheral Fordism', to describe the international division of labour between core and peripheral Fordism.

⁴ See Hakim (1995b), Allen (1994) and Henderson and Castells (1987) for global restructuring; Newby et al. (1985) for geographical recession and reorganization; Piore and Sable (1984) and Littler and Salaman (1984) for flexible production and the reorganisation of work; Akinson and Gregory (1986) for flexible management strategy at enterprise level.

labour costs by marginalising certain groups of the existing or potential workforce.

No matter what rosy or fashionable terms⁵ the management use, the simple fact is that most of the newly created jobs in the developed capitalist countries are part-time, contract,⁶ temporary or self-employed jobs. The common characteristic of these marginal jobs is that the jobholders are entitled to minimal job security. Workers are liable to be freely hired-and-fired according to the fluctuating demands of the market. Moreover, most of them do not belong to any union because it is difficult for unions to organise these workers because they are employed on a part-time basis, or they are on temporary or short term contracts, or they work at home. The self-employed and the contractors⁷, have lost their entitlement to the protection of labour legislation, because their relationship with their employers has already been transformed from an 'employment relation' to a 'business contractual relation' (Collins 1990).

In Third World countries, the growth of poverty and the expansion of the informal economy signify the continuous marginalisation of Third World workers (Portes et al. 1989; Watkins 1995). Behind the miracle of the Newly

⁵ In addition to restructuring and rationalisation, the current fashionable terms are 're-engineering' and 'total quality management'.

⁶ Contract workers are those workers who are not 'permanent' employees, but are only employed for a fixed period laid down by the contract. The length of employment may vary from several months to several years.

⁷ Contractors are those persons whose relationship with the supplier of works is not an employer-employee relationship, but a business contractual relationship. If contractors further contract out work to others, they may be known as 'sub-contractors'. Contractors and sub-contractors are not employees of the supplier of work, so that they are different from contract workers.

Industrialised Countries (NICs),⁸ millions of young female workers in the export processing zones are working in employment relations based on patriarchal, paternalistic and patrimonial systems of labour control (Deyo 1989). By working with their so-called 'nimble' fingers, they are selling not only their labour power, but also putting their health and life at risk, as they are working in factories that are notorious for poor health and safety conditions. Thousands of them have lost their lives in fires, explosions, chemical leakages and other disastrous accidents.⁹

The continuous marginalisation of workers in the developed capitalist countries, developing countries and the NICs is a result of the 'Changing International Division of Labour' (CIDL).¹⁰ The extending pre-eminence of the transnational corporations (TNCs), the growing role of the transnational financial conglomerates (TFCs), and the increasing mobility of industrial and financial capital are the significant features of the CIDL. The global expansion of capital and the transnationalisation of production go hand in hand with repressive political institutions and social formations¹¹ in the Third World. When workers in the Third World and the NICs dare to stand up to organise themselves, they usually find the big stick of the state is waiting for them. The

⁸ Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs) include Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea, Brazil, Mexico and other countries, whose economies 'took off' in the late 1960s and 1970s. Their strategy of economic growth was to integrate into the world capitalist system by means of export-oriented industrialisation.

⁹ Various notorious industrial accidents in Asia were reported in *Asian Labour Update* issue 21, April 1996 and issue 24, June 1997.

¹⁰ Robin Cohen firstly introduced this term in his work, *The new Helots*, in 1987 (Cohen, 1987). I will discuss this concept in Chapter 3.

¹¹ A social formation is an actually existing society in which one or more modes of production may be dominant.

repressive state is liable to use all coercive means to suppress any attempt of the organised labour movement to defend itself. Trade unions are variously suspended, dissolved, forced into controlled central bodies, or subjected to a battery of restrictive measures (Southall 1988).

The downfall of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe, and the capitalist economic reforms in China and Vietnam, all seem to be a sign of the triumph of capitalism. In these ex-socialist countries millions of workers in state and collective enterprises are facing the same problems of restructuring and mass unemployment, perhaps more bitterly, than their counterparts in western capitalist countries. Neo-classical economic policies, namely privatisation, minimal government intervention and free trade for foreign goods, imposed by IMF and World Bank as the pre-conditions of loans, have helped to export the marginalisation of workers from West to East.¹²

Marginalisation: Division and Fragmentation

The marginalisation of workers has not only challenged the solidarity and fraternity of the proletariat, but also posed a serious challenge to this traditional, orthodox and simplified idea of a unified working class as 'proletarian'. Along with the marginalisation process is the division and fragmentation of the working class into different but interrelated dimensions: the labour process, market position and social position.

¹² As we can see the IMF imposed harsh and strict pre-conditions on borrowers like Mexico in 1989 and South Korea in 1997 to 'liberalise' their economy i.e. cutting public deficits, opening up local markets for foreign capital etc.

Strategies adopted by the capitalists to achieve the marginalisation of the workforce include rearranging the labour process so as to increase 'functional flexibility' and 'numerical flexibility' (Atkinson 1985). 'Functional flexibility' is achieved by demanding that 'core' workers perform multi-tasks whereas 'numerical flexibility' is attained by employing more 'peripheral' workers: part-time, temporary, contract workers, out-workers, contractors, and the self-employed. The division of labour between the 'core' and the 'peripheral', and among the different 'peripheral' sections of workers, is not merely a division across the functions in the labour process, but also a division of workers who are on different levels of status.¹³

According to the traditional Marxist classification, the self-employed and contractors among the above peripheral workers are considered as 'petty-bourgeois', not members of the 'proletariat'. However, the new division among workers makes the above classification a paradox. The self-employed and the contractors do not have a *de jure* employer, so they are not waged labour. Logically then they are not working class. Nevertheless, in reality, they may have served the same *de facto* employer for many years. Most of these *de facto* employers are indeed the ex-employer of the self-employed and the contractors. These *de facto* employers enjoy the same authority in the labour process as before. They still decide what to produce and how to produce. They still gain most out of the profit. Nothing has really changed in the labour process, except the title of workers. They are now 'self-employed' or 'contractors' but no

¹³ Status here refers to a broad Weberian sense, which follows the plea by Crompton (1993) to bring status back into class analysis.

longer 'employees'. In essence, the social relation of production of these 'self-employed' and 'contractors' is a capitalist 'waged labour' production relation. They are indeed part of the new marginalised working class, but not 'petty-bourgeois' in the traditional Marxist sense.

In relation to the location of workers in the labour market, mass unemployment has challenged the division between those who are selling and those who are willing but unable to sell their labour power. Both the never-employed youth of the second generation of ethnic minorities in Britain, and the displaced middle aged and elderly manufacturing workers in Hong Kong, are not able to sell their labour power, despite being willing to do so. According to the orthodox Marxist view, they are not 'proletarian' or working class but only 'the reserve army of labour', or 'underclass'. However, in reality, most of them survive by doing some casual jobs in the informal economy. They work infrequently, sometimes for one or two days per month. It sounds ridiculous that they are marginal workers when they are working whereas they become an 'underclass' for the rest of the time. The overlapping and inter-changing of status as underclass and marginal workers indicate that the marginalisation of labour has created divisions among workers of different market positions.¹⁴ I would suggest that 'the reserve army of labour' and 'the

¹⁴ Westergaard (1995) claims that the retired poor, who make up some two-fifths or more of the poor in Britain, cannot easily be seen as a species apart from rank-and-file wage-earners, or from the prospectively pension-poor wage-earners. He also proclaims that joblessness does not mark off a distinct group, in spite of continuous 'de-industrialisation' and that renewed recessions in the early 1990s appear to have spread the risks of redundancy rather wider.

underclass' are indeed part of the marginalised working class with different market positions.

The marginalisation process reinforces the existing division among workers with different social positions with reference to gender and ethnicity. Women and ethnic minorities face institutional discrimination, which has forced them to be concentrated in low-paid and low skilled marginal jobs. It is self evident that the marginal person in a society usually gets the marginal jobs. This discrimination process is a systematic domination by men and ethnic majorities to marginalise other members of the working class. For this reason, some argue that it may probably create new fault lines among workers with 'gender' and 'ethnicity' cutting across 'class'. The importance of gender and ethnicity as social stratification forces challenges the idea that class is the 'only independent variable' of sociology.

The 'Making' of a Marginal Working Class

The marginalisation of workers has also posed important empirical and theoretical questions about theories of class. Empirically, the marginalisation process of labour is now dividing workers into two distinct groups: the mainstream and the marginal. If the new division line between the mainstream and the marginal workers is highly 'impermeable', then the working class may have already split up into two distinct classes.

In the past different theories of class or classes have considered, for example the 'contradictory class position' of the new middle class (Wright

1985; Wright 1989) or the 'embourgeoisement' of the affluent working class (Goldthorpe et al. 1968) to explain the unfinished revolutionary task of the proletariat, as predicted by Marx. An alternative explanation for the lack of revolutionary action on the part of the 'proletariat', centres on the inaction of the affluent 'mainstream' workers. The revolutionary potential of 'marginal' workers may be a crucial factor in explaining the reason why outbreaks of socialist revolutions were mainly by marginal workers in Russia, China and Vietnam. By contrast, the mainstream industrial workers in Germany, Britain or USA produced no revolutionary surges.

The different levels of consciousness and the actions of mainstream and marginal workers should be understood by investigating the social relations between the mainstream and the marginal. The persistence of a class of marginal workers may have provided both a material benefit and a psychological threat for mainstream workers, which structured their attitudes and inhibited their action against capital.

The first set of important research questions in this study are: Whether marginal workers constitute a new class with a distinct class position, consciousness and action different from mainstream workers? What is the social relationship between the mainstream and the marginal? Is the unequal power relationship between the mainstream and the marginal only based on oppression? Or will the mainstream indeed exploit the marginal by appropriating economic surplus from the marginal?

My concept of a class is broadly similar to that put forward by E.P.

Thompson:

By class I understand a historical phenomenon, unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected events, both in the raw material of experience and in consciousness. I emphasise that it is a *historical* phenomenon. I do not see class as a 'structure', nor even as a 'category', but as something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships... And class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs.

(Thompson 1980: 8-9, original stress)

Following the terminology of E.P. Thompson: *The Making of the English Working Class*, my first research question can then be summarised as follows: What happens in the making of the marginal working class?

Marginal is Critical

'Marginal', in common usage, represents the minority, unimportant, powerless and transient groups with respect to the 'mainstream'. According to such a common understanding, 'marginal workers' might be often considered as those workers who are a minority in number,¹⁵ unimportant to the economy, powerless in politics and transitional in existence. However, this may not be the case.

The second set of research questions in this study is to explore whether marginal is critical. My hypothesis is that marginal workers are not the minor,

¹⁵ For example, Westergaard (1995) suggests that the working class is being cleft into two increasingly separate and distinct groups. He claims that 'Below the line are a growing number, yet *permanently* a minority, (my stress) whose livelihood from paid work is at best poor and infirm.' (1995: 115).

unimportant, powerless and transient elements of capitalist development. Marginal workers are critical to the development of capitalism in two senses. Firstly, critical means important. Marginal workers are important and indispensable to the development of capitalism. In the second sense, critical means non-conforming. Marginal workers are sceptical about and resist being subsumed into capitalism.

Owing to the different but continuous divisions of labour in capitalist development, marginal workers are growing in numbers and categories. Marginal workers have become the majority of the world labour force, especially in the Third World and Newly Industrialised Countries.

The existence of marginal workers is not a transient or temporary phenomenon but has persisted permanently and consistently in different historical periods and in different forms of production of capitalism. These different forms have induced the utilisation of different sub-groups of marginal workers.

Marginal workers are an indispensable element contributing to the development of capitalism. They are as important as, if not more important than, mainstream labour in making contributions to the expanding capitalist World System.

The marginal position of marginal workers in capitalist society may induce their marginal consciousness: a never-ending choice between conformity or resistance to capitalist subsumption. Marginal workers may react fiercely against capitalist exploitation in crisis situations. They occasionally show their

strength and solidarity in responding to the subsumption of capital and the oppression of the state. Marginal workers also react against capitalist exploitation by changing their status as a member of one sub-group of marginal workers to another sub-group. For example Asian male workers in Britain, who were made redundant in the 1970s and 1980 started their own small businesses and became self-employed petty-bourgeois.

Some commentators argue that the main division within the working class is the difference of legal or union protection or organising power enjoyed by different groups of workers. It follows that unprivileged workers are considered to be 'unprotected' (Harrod 1987). However, these authors have overlooked the power and potential of marginal workers. Owing to the intensity of oppression, marginal workers may not react overtly towards exploitation and domination, but may seek to defend themselves by 'hidden and covert' resistance (Cohen 1991). Marginal workers may empower themselves but use strategies and forms of organisation different from mainstream workers to protect themselves. They may prefer sabotage, or just withdraw their own labour, rather than strike. They may not be organised under trade unions in the workplace but use extended family networks or ethnic organisations in the community to procure mutual help and solidarity.

Conceptualisation of Marginal Workers

In this section, I will first review the concept of 'marginal', 'marginality' and 'unprotected workers'. I will then define the main subject of this study, marginal workers. 'Marginal' and 'marginality' have been widely used both in a

common sense usage and academic research. Perlman (1976) states that 'the common sense use of "marginal" and "marginality" loosely refers to the poor in general, the jobless, migrants, members of other subcultures, racial and ethnic minorities, and deviants of any sort'. This common and multi-dimensional description of marginality is similar to the blurred and complicated characteristics of the different groups of marginal workers.¹⁶

Marginal Man: A Psycho-sociological Definition

A series of studies on 'marginal man' have been carried out by various American sociologists (Dick-Clark 1966; Merton 1957; Park 1928; Stonequist 1935) to study the psycho-sociological aspect of the American. They were the first to introduce the term 'marginality' to study the individual's psychological dimension. In essence, they set the individualistic paradigm for later studies on 'marginals' and 'marginality'.

Researching human migration, Park (1928) defines marginal man as a 'cultural hybrid': a man on the margin of two cultures and two societies which have never been completely interpenetrated and fused. Stonequist (1935) argues 'marginal' represents 'a process of abstraction, a core of psychological traits which are the inner correlates of the dual pattern of social conflict and identification'. Therefore, the marginalised individual is likely to display a 'dual personality' and have a 'double consciousness'. In his work, *Social Theory and*

¹⁶ The subjective elements in defining 'marginal' include a constant tension of choice, a feeling of exclusion and an aspiration for inclusion. The modifier 'marginal' is more accurate and descriptive than the spatial modifier 'peripheral'. The reason is that by describing one as a peripheral worker, the modifier 'peripheral' mostly signifies a functional division of labour between the core and peripheral in the labour process and implies little or no indication to one's consciousness.

Social Structure, Merton (1957) defines marginal man as someone aspiring for membership of a certain group but ineligible for membership. The marginal man is then the victim of aspiration as he neither achieves what he wants nor satisfies what he hopes. In summarising this tradition, Dick-Clark (1966) explains that the dominant group may encourage their subordinates to adopt some of the dominant group's attitudes (punctuality, thrift, etc.); but, if they want to stay in the dominating position, the dominant group cannot permit the subordinates to share their power or opportunities.

This psycho-sociological definition of marginality is based on an assumption which is debatable. It assumes that most marginals would aspire to integrate into mainstream society. It follows that marginality, the psychological trait of the marginals, is caused by the discrepancy between their aspiration for integration and the reality of exclusion. However, according to various empirical studies, this assumption may not be true. Kerckhoff & McCormick (1955) and Mann (1957) find that members of minority groups in general show no more marginal personality traits than mainstream groups and conclude that marginal situations do not automatically give rise to marginal personalities. Therefore, they argue that marginality only exists among those individuals who identify strongly with the dominant group.

Although some of the marginal migrants strive to integrate into mainstream culture, many of them do not. On the contrary, many first and second generation migrants are actually afraid of both the complete 'absorption' of their children into mainstream society and the loss of their

original identity and culture. They deliberately hope to retain their own culture, religion and language by setting up community organisations, religious groups and mother tongue schools.¹⁷

The aspiration-for-integration hypothesis of marginality is not really based on empirical evidence, but on the biased, ethnocentric, conceited self-image of the mainstream. Having said that, this psycho-sociological approach has made its own academic contribution. It reveals the dilemma of the marginals on whether to integrate into the mainstream or persevere with their original life-style. If the marginals are not permissive and passive individuals but voluntary and collective agents, it is then not a dilemma but an opportunity for them to choose. They can choose to integrate into the mainstream or persevere with their own culture in a voluntary, calculated and strategic manner. This psycho-sociological approach to the question of marginality reminds us of the subjectivity of the marginals. Marginal workers are not only confined and determined by structures, but rather they themselves are also agents who dialectically act on and modify the structure.

Marginality: The Ethnographic and Modernisation School

In the 1960s, another approach to defining marginality was introduced by the sociologists and anthropologists who employed ethnographic methods in studying migrants in squatter settlements in Latin American cities. This

¹⁷ I will elaborate this point with a thorough discussion in Chapter 7.

ethnographic approach is also known as the 'peasant-in-the-cities' approach. Perlman (1976) mentions that there are two main findings of the ethnographic school: firstly, marginality is due to the persistence of rural customs and institutions in an urban setting; and secondly, marginality is due to the lack of community pressure on the migrant population.

The 'traditionality/modernisation school' of marginality is concerned with the effect of rural-urban differences on the marginals during the modernisation and development process. Research in this school comprises two distinct forms: the socio-psychological form which deals with the assimilation of modern, urban, industrial values by individuals in transition; and the political-economic form, which deals with the formation of a modern nation-state and the necessary attitudinal prerequisites of its citizenry for political and economic growth.

These two dimensions are interrelated as both of them interpret the notion of marginality by saying that large portions of the urban poor, who are either first or second generation migrants and often from the countryside, remain detached from city life because they lack the necessary 'modern' attitudes and behaviour.

The scholars of the 'traditionality/modernisation school' regard the individual's orientation and world-view as a reason for the perpetuation of 'under-development', and the persistence of a traditional mentality among the population as an 'obstacle to development'. 'Attitudinal modernity', a

syndrome of values, attitudes, and aspirations, is seen to be a prerequisite not only for economic development but political maturity as well.

The attitudinal obstacles to modernisation are a lack of control over nature; feelings of fatalism and religiosity; a distrust of science, technology, and innovation; an inability to plan for the future; and an authoritarian, non-achievement-oriented personality. All of these obstacles are tied in with family, clan and kinship (Perlman 1976).

Both the ethnographic and traditionality/modernisation schools of marginality may be criticised for their static dichotomous division, teleological development and uni-directional transformation assumptions. Firstly, they assume a clear dichotomy between the marginal and the mainstream, or in their original concepts, traditional and modern. They have tried their best to define, operationalise and measure the concepts. However, their static viewpoint makes them unsuccessful in accounting for a dynamic phenomenon which is ever changing. On the one hand, the 'traditional' values and cultures of the marginals have been changed to the 'modern' trait. On the other hand, the modern mainstream may have also adapted, re-appreciated and revived some traditional, 'golden day' values (e.g. self-help, community care) to suit the needs of mainstream. The distinction between marginal and mainstream, or between traditional and modern, is unclear, ambiguous, and ever changing. Therefore, it is preferable for us to use a dynamic viewpoint to treat the distinction between the marginal and the mainstream.

The second mistake of the above two schools is that they consider the transformation from marginal to mainstream as a uni-directional and irreversible process. They assume that the marginal will only integrate into the mainstream, but not the other way round. However, evidence from Third World countries shows that many entrepreneurs in the informal sector have indeed worked previously in the modern sector. Therefore, mobility between marginal and mainstream is bi-directional: while the marginal may transform to the mainstream; mainstream actors may also drop out to become marginal. In view of the above shortcomings, I would suggest that we should study the bi-directional process of mobility thoroughly in order to understand the segmented and interrelated sub-groups of marginal workers.

In conclusion, the flaws of the ethnographic and traditionality/modernisation schools are their static dichotomous division, teleological development and uni-directional transformation assumptions. On the contrary in the following study I will treat the division between the marginal and the mainstream as dynamic, ambiguous and ever changing.

Unprotected Workers: A Relational and Organic Concept

Harrod (1987) has integrated both Marxist and Weberian traditions by using the concept of power in defining 'unprotected workers', and by considering 'unprotected workers' as a relational and organic concept with respect to 'established workers' to develop a 'multiple social relations of production approach'. Harrod's conceptual framework and his categories of

'unprotected workers' are very similar to my concept and definition of 'marginal workers'. Without an explicit claim, Harrod tries to utilise at least three traditions: namely the Weberian, Marxist and feminist schools in his analysis of power and class. Harrod has made an important contribution to integrating these traditions in order to understand the diversified situations of 'unprotected workers'. However, he has not evaluated the concepts of these traditions explicitly and has applied the concepts in a non-concrete way.

Harrod defines 'unprotected workers' as those 'subordinate workers within subordinate forms of social relations' (1987: 2). He argues that 'their lack of power leaves them unprotected in the face of opposing groups, unlike established workers where unions, corporations, or states have been the source of some protection and stability' (1987: 2). In short, 'the unprotected workers are those workers in forms of social relations who have not been able to develop sufficient individual or social power to resist domination and secure a degree of protection' (1987: 39). The unprotected workers include 'the subsistence farmer; the renting, indebted, or merchant-dominated peasant; the casual working urban marginal; the unorganised wage worker; the self-employed; and housewives' (1987: 2).

For Harrod, the multiple social relations of production approach emphasises occupation, gender, religion, nationality, and sometimes class as the basis for organisation, consciousness, and the dynamic of change and places his analysis on the power relations of production. Harrod argues that the 'power relations surrounding production, as the primary source of consciousness,

organisation and action must first be understood' (1987: 5). Unprotected workers may be more strongly divided by the forms of the social relations of production that govern their working lives. However, Harrod stresses that

it should not be thought that the objective is therefore to create new, separate and separable categories, because only by understanding potential divisions of populations can any effort be made to forge the alliances necessary for a broader support for change or its converse of divide and rule.

(1987: 5)

By using concepts of different schools, Harrod successfully accounts for the heterogeneous and complicated phenomena of unprotected workers. However, some of his concepts and definition are blurred and non-concrete. The main obstacle in Harrod's analysis is his uncritical use of a Weberian sense of power relationships in a Marxian view of the mode of production. However, we know that the base of the power relationship, and the relation between the agent and the structure are fundamentally different in the Weberian and Marxian traditions. The two traditions may not be mixed in an uncritical and unsophisticated way. It was a brave attempt for Harrod to combine Weberian, Marxist and feminist views in analysing the situation of unprotected workers. Nevertheless, we should be aware that there are theoretical and empirical discrepancies between the three traditions. Adopting the merits of Harrod's work, I will try to combine these three different traditions in analysing marginal workers but with the intention of integrating them in a more explicit and critical way. Moreover, in my conceptualisation of 'marginal workers', I will follow Harrod's conceptualisation of unprotected workers, which is a theoretical based, relational and organic concept.

Definition of Marginal Workers

Marginal workers, the subject of this study, can be defined along two dimensions: *the relation of social production between marginal workers and mainstream workers, and the subjective consciousness of marginal workers*. The first dimension is a relational approach. Marginal workers exist with respect to their subordinated relation to mainstream workers. *Marginal workers are those workers who are more subordinated in the process of the occupational, gender, or ethnic division of labour*. Having shared part of the appropriation of economic fruits with capital, mainstream workers can enjoy more privileges, power and autonomy than marginal workers. In other words, marginal workers are under the domination and exploitation of both mainstream workers and capital.

However, the above objective 'position' in the social structure is a necessary but not sufficient condition in defining marginal workers. The subjective consciousness of an individual or a group of workers is as crucial as their objective position. *Being a marginal worker, one would feel excluded, treated as an outcast by the mainstream*. Moreover, the marginal worker ought to be able to identify with one of the marginal groups: women workers, black workers, or migrant workers who share a similar fate in the labour process, in their market and social position.

In short, the term marginal workers is a generic term for the following groups of workers: women workers, homeworkers, unpaid family workers who are subordinated in the *gender* division of labour; black workers, migrant workers, workers who seek asylum, and illegal immigrant workers who are

subordinated in the *ethnic* division of labour; the self-employed, part-time, contract and temporary workers who are subordinated in the *occupational* division of labour.

Many pieces of research and studies have focused on one or several groups of the above subordinated workers.¹⁸ However, I prefer to consider them as an *organic and interrelated whole* rather than treating them as discrete unrelated groupings in this research.¹⁹ This is because the dividing lines between the occupational, gender and ethnic divisions of labour cut across each other and induce a great overlapping of, and high mobility among, these sub-groups. Many attempts to analyse marginal workers separately were unsatisfactory and incomplete. On the one hand, their common subordinated position in the power structure has posed similar political, economic and ideological domination problems for these different subgroups, and these problems have provided the base for unity and solidarity. On the other hand, I think that the strategy of 'divide and rule' is commonly and deliberately used by a dominant group to maintain its superiority. Therefore, it is practical to consider the relationship between the marginal and the dominator as a whole and to investigate the interrelationship among the marginal workers, so as to evaluate and formulate their strategy for struggle.

¹⁸ Many works focus on certain subgroups of marginal workers, namely, Allen and Wolkowitz (1987) on homeworkers; Cohen (1987) on migrant workers; Collins (1990) on domestic labour and self employment; Cross (1992) on ethnic minority workers; Gornick and Jacobs (1996) and Wickham (1997) on part-time workers; and Phizacklea (1983) on black women workers.

¹⁹ For example, Westergaard (1995) asserts that the marginal segments of the working class are diverse of composition. They will include people wholly out of work or for good, workers in sectors where effective guardianship from unions or statutory control does not reach; people in and out of jobs according to the vagaries of a labour market now more 'flexible'; and many part-time employees.

In this study, I will perceive marginal workers as an organic, interrelated collective. However, at the same time, in view of the heterogeneous nature of the umbrella label: marginal workers, I will pay attention to the distinctive elements of the sub-groups in order to understand the dynamic process and complicated structure within them.

I define marginal workers as an organic and interrelated collective determined by both their objective location and their subjective consciousness. The strength of this conceptualisation is that marginal workers are defined as a relational and organic concept so that the social relations of production between them and mainstream workers can be investigated. However, this conceptualisation still has some ambiguities when distinguishing marginal from mainstream workers. While some workers are highly mobile between the boundary of mainstream and marginal, others are more unambiguously in the latter category. Again some workers may occupy a marginal position but may not have a marginal consciousness, and vice versa.

This conceptualisation of marginal workers thus only provides a preliminary and hypothetical framework to start the investigation of this thesis. The concept of marginal workers will be modified and specified during the presentation of the empirical data in the following chapters. Moreover, owing to the focus of this thesis and the constraints of length, the empirical investigation will focus on those more unambiguous sub-groups of marginal workers, but not the 'marginal' groups between the marginal and the mainstream. Furthermore, owing to the problem of gaining access, I did not interview all sub-groups of marginal workers, such as workers who are seeking

asylum or illegal immigrant workers. Therefore my empirical investigation will be based on more confined sub-sets than those described of my original abstract construction.

Organisation of this Thesis

This thesis comprises three sections: an overview, a literature review and research findings. The first section is an overview of the whole thesis in three chapters. This chapter is an introductory chapter, which discusses the context, research questions and definition of marginal workers. Chapter 2 will describe in detail the research design and methods, the choice of regions, the procedure of data collection and analysis. The second section is a literature review with two chapters. The structural causes of the rise of marginal workers will be explained in Chapter 3. Various debates on social stratification in general and class analysis in specific will then be reviewed in Chapter 4 in order to understand the class formation – ‘the making of the marginal working class’.

The third section, research findings, consists of four chapters. Chapter 5 provides a combined quantitative and qualitative analysis of the ‘sedimentary class formation’ of British marginal workers. Chapter 6 gives an analysis of the ‘disrupted class formation’ of Hong Kong marginal workers and compares the class structures and class formations in Britain and Hong Kong. The consciousness and action of marginal workers in these two regions will then be compared and contrasted in Chapter 7. The final chapter will discuss the theoretical and practical implications of this study.

Chapter 2

Research Design and Methods

A Comparative Study

In order to investigate whether marginal workers are important and exist permanently rather than temporarily in the capitalist world system, it is desirable to employ a comparative approach to compare and contrast the evidence at different points in the spatial and historical spectrum of capitalist development. Although it is ideal to include as many countries as possible, it is not practical owing to limited time and resources.

The criteria for selecting Britain and Hong Kong for comparison are representativeness and comparability. Firstly, they are representative of different forms of the accumulation of capitalism and the marginalisation of workers. While Britain is a representative of the developed capitalist countries of the West, Hong Kong is a model of the Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs) in the East.

Britain was not only the first industrialised country but was also the most important imperial power. Its hegemonic position in the world system was, however, replaced by the United States after the two World Wars. Since the 1970s, Britain has faced a significant 'deindustrialisation' process and a mass unemployment problem. Britain was not alone as other western capitalist

countries also faced structural and long-term unemployment. One of the most important remedies for the British declining economy, proposed by the Thatcher government in 1979, was to create a flexible workforce by cutting welfare benefits and launching anti-union legislation. The extensive marginalisation of labour is signified by the tremendous increase of part-time, temporary, contract and home-based workers after the 1980s. This 'new right' philosophy, or neo-classical economic strategy, was then copied by the governments of most other western capitalist countries, though in different degrees.

Being one of the 'Four Little Dragons', Hong Kong has always been quoted as the most successful example of market capitalism and a model of the export-oriented industrialisation of the Third World.¹ Since the 1960s, the Hong Kong government has adopted a 'laissez-faire/positive non-intervention' economic policy, which is currently recommended by the World Bank and IMF to other Third World countries.

After the open door policy and economic reforms of China in 1979, Hong Kong's economy has been integrating with southern China to form a 'regional political economy' in which Hong Kong performs the role of a 'secondary world city'. Most of the production lines of the manufacturing industry of Hong Kong have already been moved into southern China. These factories in southern China employ millions of migrant workers from other

¹ Academics from both neoclassical and Marxist traditions quoted Hong Kong as the ideal case of competitive capitalism. Friedmann (1990) praises Hong Kong as the most successful case of the invisible hand of the market. Harris (1986) claims the success of the NICs represent 'the end of Third World(ism)' and Hong Kong is given as one of the examples.

parts of China. Therefore, Hong Kong is also an ideal case for showing the marginalisation of workers caused by the changing international division of labour. Hong Kong workers face the threat of economic restructuring, the rise of unemployment, and the importation of migrant workers. This experience is not unique to workers in Hong Kong, but is shared by millions of workers in the NICs.

In addition to representativeness, these two countries were selected to make comparisons of 'like with unlike' and 'like and like'.² The comparison between Hong Kong as a model of the NICs in the East, with Britain as an example of the developed capitalist countries in the West, is mainly a 'like with unlike' comparison. Hong Kong and Britain display a great contrast in their cultural, social and economic structure. However, for over one and a half centuries, Hong Kong was under British colonial rule, from 1842 to 1997. The legal and administrative systems as well as particular labour policies and legislation in Hong Kong originated from or were copied from Britain. This comparison between them, especially on matters concerning the state, can be made in a 'like with like' manner.

² Marsh (1967) proposed the 'like with like' and 'like with unlike' schemes in doing comparative study.

Choice of Methods

Unit of Analysis: Structure vs. Agent

It has been a classic epistemological dilemma for sociologists to decide whether their analysis should focus on the underlying forces of the 'structure' or should it emphasise the understanding of the subjectivity of the 'agent'. Recent emphasis, however, has been on the inseparable and interactive nature between the structure and the agent. Some sociologists (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Giddens 1990) argue that it is more desirable to understand the objectivity of the structure as well as the subjectivity of the agent in a dialectic way. Having accepted this idea for tackling the structure, the agent and their interaction simultaneously, I intend to adopt a multi-level unit of analysis in my study.

The macro-level unit of analysis in my research is the 'world capitalist system', which is the underlying structure in the creation of marginal workers. The universal growth of marginal workers ought to be understood within the framework of the world capitalist system. At this level of analysis, Britain and Hong Kong are case studies for verifying the hypothesis about the impact of globalisation and the changing international division of labour on the growth of marginal workers.

The meso-level refers to the collective sub-groups of marginal workers, for example: women worker groups, migrant worker kinship networks, ethnic minority community organisations, co-operatives of the self-employed and the

union of the Third World workers, etc. Many of these networks and organisations exert structural control and oppression over marginal workers as well as providing the source of power and struggle of marginal workers against the exploitation of capital and the repression of the state. Amongst these groups, shop-floor trade unions are one of the most important institutions at this level of analysis as they are sources of a working class consciousness and provides experiences of organising for marginal workers.

The micro-level of unit of analysis is the individual marginal worker. The work and life history of individual marginal workers will be investigated in order to understand their mobility in different phases of their life cycles. The psycho-social aspect of the individual marginal worker is another locus for understanding their subjectivity. The individual consciousness and collective identity of marginal workers will also be analysed at this level.

In order to investigate these three levels or units of analysis, I prefer to use a multiple strategy research method rather than one single method. In my study, I will employ both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyse primary as well as secondary data.

Combined Use of Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

Some debates among sociologists might be avoided if their views and concepts were not so rigidly dichotomised. Differences rather than similarities have been articulated between macro and micro theories, between theory-

testing and theory-generating methodology, as well as between quantitative and qualitative methods. The dichotomised division, however, has neglected the virtual existence of a mixed and un-differentiable grey area in between the dichotomy. It would be better if the world-view of a dichotomised world is substituted by one which is based on a spectrum.

It has recently been emphasised that both qualitative and quantitative methods should be combined in comprehensive research (Bryman 1988; Dex 1991; Layder 1993). The reason is that both qualitative and quantitative methods share common epistemological and methodological problems. Neither of them can claim to be intrinsically superior to the other. Their strengths and weaknesses are indeed complementary to one another. Researchers ought to select qualitative or quantitative methods, or both of them, according to their theory, research objectives and questions, in order to utilise the strengths of both methods.

In this research, I employ both quantitative and qualitative methods at different levels of analysis and also as a means of 'triangulation' to improve the validity and reliability of the data. For quantitative methods, I will perform a secondary data analysis of the 1991 Census – Samples of Anonymised Records (SARs) of Britain and also review other official statistics. For qualitative methods, I conducted oral history interviews with marginal workers and unstructured interviews with groups and organisations of marginal workers.

Combined Use of Primary and Secondary Data

Hakim (1982: 1) defines secondary analysis as 'any further analysis of an existing dataset which presents interpretations, conclusions or knowledge additional to, or different from, those presented in the first report on the inquiry as a whole and its main focus'.

For an individual researcher with limited resources and experience, the use of secondary analysis has the advantages of saving a lot of time, money and effort, and avoids wastage in collecting a data set similar to that which has already been collected. The researcher can then be released from the routine of data collection, and can concentrate on the analytical part of his or her own research (Dale et al. 1988; Hyman 1972; Kiecolt and Nathan 1985). In view of my own limitations, I would like in this study to do a secondary analysis of the 1991 Census – SARs of Britain.

However, secondary data analysis has its own methodological problems. Firstly, a researcher who performs a secondary data analysis still has to face the problem of selection. That means he or she would still have to prepare an explanation of his or her reasons for selecting such a data set. Secondly, the methodology and theory of the original research may contradict those of the secondary research. Finally, the original data and questionnaire may not include sufficient variables to conduct a meaningful secondary analysis (Dale et al. 1988). I face the difficulty of insufficient variables when I do the secondary analysis of the 1% sample data of the 1991 Census of Hong Kong. I will discuss this difficulty in more detail in the SARs section.

In order to investigate different hypotheses at these three levels of the unit of analysis, I am going to apply both quantitative and qualitative methods as summarised in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Different Methods for the Three Levels of Unit of Analysis

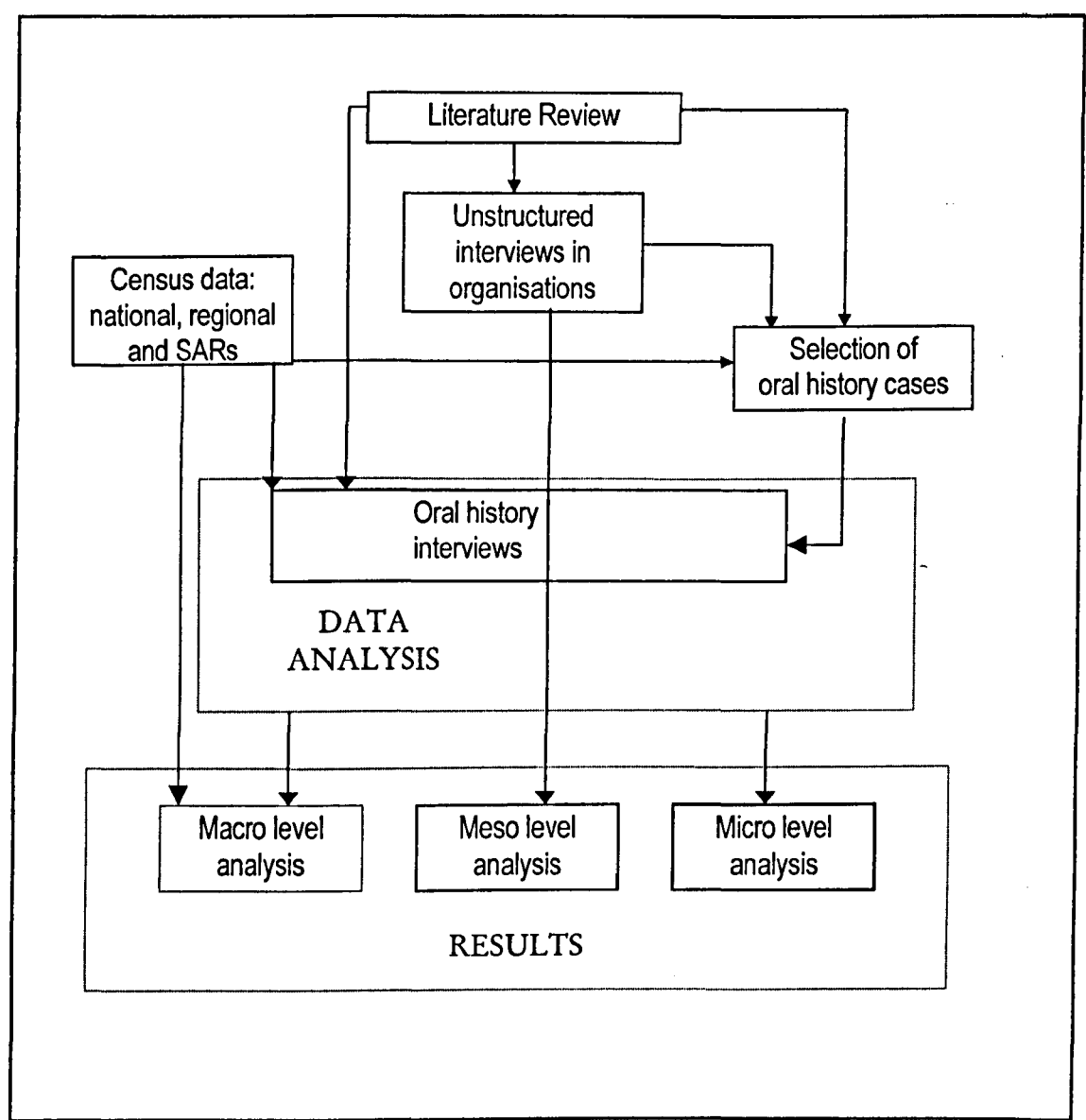
unit of analysis	hypotheses/research questions	method(s)	data source & type
Capitalist world system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • marginal workers are the majority in the world labour force. • marginal workers persist in different phases of capitalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • statistics review (international and national) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • secondary, quantitative
Collective group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • marginal workers are not powerless against the subsumption of capital and repression of the state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • structured and unstructured interview • literature review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • primary, quantitative and qualitative • secondary, qualitative
Individual marginal worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mobility of marginal workers during different life/family cycles • consciousness and identity of marginal workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oral history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • primary, qualitative

For this study, my complementary use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, and both a secondary analysis of census data as well as the primary collection of life oral history data, is indeed doing ‘triangulation’ and ‘collecting multiple accounts’ in order to understand and ‘discover’ the work and life histories of individual marginal workers.

Moreover, interviews and the documentation of the organisations of marginal workers provide another source of multiple accounts.

Attempting to conduct this study with such diversified methods, I face the challenge of integrating them organically and reflexively so that they are really used in a complementary way. The relationship between the different methods in different phases can be summarised in the following figure:

Figure 2.1: Relationship between Different Methods in Different Phases of Research



Triangulation: The Relationship between Different Methods

I have selected the research methods with the aim of providing multiple accounts and triangulation. In the conceptualisation and operationalisation phase, a review of literature and census data provides a general idea and picture about who marginal workers are and what their basic characteristics are.

In order to select relevant and representative cases for oral history interviews, I have combined information from three sources or accounts. Firstly, I have examined the census data of both the West Midlands region in Britain and of Hong Kong to outline the categories of marginal workers and their proportions. Secondly, I have interviewed organisations to obtain more information on the different categories of marginal workers, e.g. home-workers, black women workers, and migrant workers. Thirdly, I have reviewed accounts and literature, including documents and publications, about marginal workers to obtain basic information and history about them. With the help of these works I was able to construct a classification scheme to highlight the different categories of cases in preparation for my oral history interviews (Appendix 1).

In the data analysis stage, I analyse interactively both quantitative data from the SARs and qualitative data from oral histories, hoping that both data sets will formulate new questions or hypotheses that will be explored and counter-checked in another data set so as to really exercise triangulation and provide a coherent account. Through the initial exercises of triangulation, I

discovered that I had neglected some groups of marginal workers in my oral history interviews. To tackle this issue, I then added more cases to fill in some missing categories and cases and also to explore newly constructed research questions. This is the reason why the data collection and analysis stage of this research has lasted for more than three years. This stage only came to an end when I found that no more information could be obtained from the oral history interviews.

Different data sets lead to different levels of results. While the census data provide the macro level analysis and the interviews in organisations provide the meso level analysis, the oral history data provide both a micro and a macro level analysis.

Discussion of Methods Used

Quantitative Methods

Statistical Review

In order to test the hypothesis that marginal workers are the majority of the world labour force and have persistently existed in the development of capitalism, I conducted quantitative research on secondary statistical data e.g. Census, Labour Force Survey and other available data of Britain and of Hong Kong to investigate the growth and changes of marginal workers in the two regions.

Official statistics are strong in providing measurable, longitudinal and clearly defined data. Most of them are prepared by national governments or international institutions and basically share similar definitions. Hopefully, with a little modification, they can be compared internationally. The weakness of official statistics about marginal workers is that they often ignore 'informal', 'underground' or 'illegal' activities which are frequently performed by marginal workers.

Moreover, the policy of the government in power and the ideology of the dominating mainstream unavoidably affect the data definition and collection processes. For example, the government can manipulate the definition of the unemployment rate by excluding from the category of the unemployed those who are receiving training or who are in an education scheme. However, using some official statistics to assess the magnitude and distribution of marginal workers is inevitable. In such circumstances, one should be highly aware of the weaknesses, flaws and bias of such official data.

The reliability of statistical data hinges not only upon the methodological and technical aspects (i.e. sampling procedure, questionnaire design and statistical measurement), but also upon the ideological aspects of collecting and analysing data. Some feminists challenge the fact that most statistics are generated from a male-dominated conception. There is an on-going debate among feminists about whether the quantitative method intrinsically contradicts the aim and objective of feminist research. Such arguments challenge the class and race-based nature of 'statistics'.

However, gender, class and racial bias exist not only in statistics, but also in any research method. The researcher, rather than the method, is the source of bias. I intend to resolve this difficulty by enhancing my critical awareness and reflexivity. In using statistics, researchers should review the bias of statistics in a critical manner.

1991 Census -- Samples of Anonymised Records (SARs)

I have gained access to both the 1991 Census -- Samples of Anonymised Records (SARs) of Britain and 1% sample census data set of Hong Kong. Furthermore, I have attempted to construct new variables in order to assess the numbers and characteristics of marginal workers.

However, there are major differences between Britain's and Hong Kong's SARs. Firstly, the British 1991 Census SARs include important variables such as secondary economic position, hours worked per week, social class and socio-economic group, which are not collected or constructed in the Hong Kong 1% sample data set. Therefore, I can only construct meaningful variables to delineate marginal workers in the SARs of Britain, but not in the case of Hong Kong.

Furthermore, the Census and Statistics Department of the Hong Kong Government imposes the restriction that an analysis of the results of the 1% sample data set cannot be published, unless the results have been re-analysed in the 10% sample data set by the Department. Owing to these limitations, I have finally decided not to report the results of the 1% sample data of Hong Kong, but only to perform a secondary data analysis on the published census data. By

contrast I have continued to use the British SARs and will report the results of them in Chapter 5.

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It should be noted that the British 1991 Census SARs only collected a few variables relating to the consciousness of the respondents. Therefore, it is difficult to define marginal workers according to their subjective consciousness when using the data set. When using the 1991 Census SARs, I distinguish marginal workers from mainstream only according to their objective labour market position.

Qualitative Methods

Oral History Interviews

The oral history method often provides a better alternative to written documents in understanding the life history of those who are underprivileged. Most existing records often reflect the standpoint of authority and the powerful. Moreover, oral history provides a more realistic and fair

reconstruction of the past, as a challenge to the established account (Thompson 1988).

The oral history method has several advantages in the study of marginal workers. Firstly, its communication medium is speech rather than writing. The latter is often a demanding and restricted skill for many marginal workers. Secondly, oral history is powerful in reviewing the subjective feeling and memory of marginal workers, whose memory and consciousness may be suppressed. It provides the possibility of recovery by enabling marginal workers to un-peel their layers of memory and consciousness. Thirdly, oral history not only reviews historical facts and structures but also allows the living humanity of the oral sources to reflect on their own history. Through oral history, marginal workers can reflect upon the meaning and values of their life, their family and their movement. Last but not least, oral history methods 'allow the original multiplicity of standpoints to be recreated' which correspond to the complex and multi-faceted reality (Thompson 1988: 5).

In addition, Bertaux and Thompson (1997) argue that life stories illustrate the centrality of subjective perceptions and evaluations in shaping the life choices. Life stories are redolent with descriptions of feeling and experience of relationships with significant others. They also reveal the importance of local contexts, structures of opportunities, and games of competition.

Case Selection

I conducted oral history interviews in both Britain and Hong Kong. For Britain, owing to my limited time and resources and the problem of

contact and travelling, I was confined to the West Midlands region as the geographical boundary for conducting my interviews. For Hong Kong, owing to its small geographical area, I did not confine the case selection to any geographical district.

My cases of the oral history interviews were selected according to the 'theoretical sample' method. I synthesised census data and information given by the organisations of marginal workers to set up a classification of marginal workers. These categories of workers were constructed so that theoretically they could cover as many different forms as possible of the relationship of marginal workers to production. In practice, the categories were defined according to their economic status, industry, occupation, ethnicity, sex, and age. The characteristics of each oral history informant can be found in Appendix 2.

Gaining Access

After I had constructed my categories of marginal workers, I sent the list to friends and other individuals, unions and other organisations, asking them to introduce informants. My research focus is, on the whole, the work and life history of the informant, rather than their present work and life situation. Therefore, I suggested that marginal workers, who were not currently engaged in any job or position, but who had such an experience for a long period during the course of their life, could also be invited as informants.

Firstly, some unionists or activists of labour organisations introduced several informants. I then employed a snowball method for finding informants

by asking the key informants to introduce some more cases required in the list. The snowball method created some unexpected but exciting results. What I collected were not single and separate oral history accounts of the individuals but related and multiple accounts of a couple of related cases. For example, I interviewed workers in the same factories, or members of the same family, so that I knew the details of their relations and their perceptions of each other.

These multiple accounts have firstly provided the possibility of triangulation to increase the validity and reliability of their accounts. Secondly, their different consciousness and actions in the same work situation, and their different life courses and mobility with the same starting point, have provided a comparable basis for theory testing or theory constructing.

From the beginning, I recognised the obvious bias of this method of gaining access, in which most informants may be activists with a radical consciousness and action, owing to their close relationship to unions and labour organisations. Therefore, I intentionally invited friends, students and lecturers at the universities and also through non-government organisations to introduce some key informants who did not have close contacts or relationships with unions or labour organisations. I also tried to interview some cases like the street-sleepers and 'caged people' in Hong Kong and hawkers in Britain through an out-reaching search in the community.

³ 'Caged people' are those residents living in the over-crowded and low standard accommodation known as 'caged house' in Hong Kong. Inside the 'caged house' are tiny bedsits (3 feet by 6 feet), surrounded by pieces of wire and looking like cages.

Data Collection

I conducted the oral history interviews in an unstructured style but basically followed the work and life history events of the informants to review both the individual and structural historical contexts. I then charted the current market and social situation of the informants to give an objective structural background. Finally I focused on the attitude and consciousness of the informants and recorded their resistance and actions.

As the interviews were conducted in an unstructured style, not all the topics and questions listed in Appendix 3 were asked in each interview. Questions were asked interactively according to the content of the answers provided and the attitudes of informants disclosed.

Data Recording and Analysis

All interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed by myself in English or in Chinese, according to the language that the interview was conducted in. Transcriptions in Chinese were then translated into English. All cases were then typed and stored in Word-for-Window's format, so that they could be easily cut-and-pasted. I performed both a horizontal and vertical analysis of the data. Firstly, I looked into the work and life history of individual cases horizontally to learn about their mobility and the interaction between their work and life history. Secondly, I compared and contrasted the evidence case by case, using the cut-and-paste method, to regroup case material under headings for analysis: for example, gender position, consciousness, and

resistance. This vertical analysis provided an insight and a synthesis for new observations and theoretical inference.

Literature Review and Interview

In order to investigate the hypothesis that marginal workers are not powerless against the oppression of capital and the repression of the state, the experience of struggle of the organisations of marginal workers and the policy of the state and capital towards marginal workers had to be investigated.

The above data are scattered in different literature published by marginal workers' organisations, employer and business federations and the government. Newspapers, publications and newsletters of marginal workers' groups and organisations were reviewed to investigate their consciousness, role in struggle and organisation. Government reports and publications related to marginal workers were also reviewed to outline the state's policy towards marginal workers. Particular attention is given to government legislation, which I perceive as a means of protection, coercion and division of marginal workers.

However, many marginal workers are being organised in ad-hoc informal groupings rather than permanent formal organisations. These marginal workers' groupings, as well as most of their organisations, do not have regular publications. I conducted direct interviews, both structured and unstructured, with these groupings in order to build up a direct contact with them. Their verbal evidence is a necessary complementary data source in

addition to the written documents. I list the organisations interviewed in Appendix 4.

Conclusion: Being a Reflexive Researcher

After the seventies, 'reflexivity' became a significant concept in different streams of sociology: symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and ethnography. However, various versions of reflexivity have been proposed by different authors, whose definitions are built on their points of reference (Gouldner 1970; Hammersley and Atkinson 1983).

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) argue that Bourdieu's brand of reflexivity differs from the others in three crucial ways. Firstly, its primary target is not the individual analyst but the social and intellectual unconsciousness which is embedded in analytic tools and operations; secondly, it must be a collective enterprise rather than the burden of the lonely academic; and thirdly, it seeks to buttress the epistemological security of sociology. They propose that, in reality, a researcher simultaneously acts as 'an individual', 'part of the social world' and 'a member of the intelligentsia'.

To enhance my reflexivity, I have followed the version of reflexivity of Bourdieu and Wacquant in writing my autobiographical account as a final remark about the formulation of research methods of this thesis. This autobiographical review firstly answers the question of 'the real start of research' – the relationship of sociological training and personal experiences in a social setting that may help to generate a research problem as suggested by

Burgess (1984: 32). Secondly, it is also an attempt to report explicitly my 'research map', as suggested by Layder (1993).

An Autobiographical Review

My argument about research methods in previous sessions has provided a rough but standard discussion about my research methodology. The image of such a neat and tidy presentation, which is common in most sociological research, gives the illusion that the researchers have undergone a rational, systematic and unproblematic process in selecting their methods. However, the choice of methods was influenced by the personal and academic background; as well as social and political beliefs of the researchers. In order to give a reflexive account and to enhance my reflexivity, I would like to write a brief autobiographical account in order to review my choice of methods and process of research.

A fundamental source of disputes over research methods among sociologists is their epistemological rather than methodological difference. Their epistemological difference is in turn a reflection of their philosophical difference. It is therefore necessary and desirable to review my philosophy and values as a starting point for reviewing my research methodology. As philosophy and values are inseparable from political and moral inclinations, I will also discuss the political and moral implications of selecting different methods for my research. Finally, I will review the influences of the academic community in general, and the staff in the Sociology department at Warwick University in particular, on my preference of research methods.

As an Individual

In his book, *The Sociological Imagination*, Mills (1959) writes that 'ours are a time of uneasiness and indifference.' According to Mills, people experience a crisis when they cherish values but feel these values to be threatened. If people are neither aware of any cherished values nor experience any threat, they experience indifference. Finally, if people are unaware of any cherished values, but still are very much aware of a threat, they experience uneasiness. The development of my values and philosophy, using Mill's term, can be divided into two stages of transformation: from crisis to uneasiness and from uneasiness to indifference.

I was born into a working class family in Hong Kong in the early 1960s. My father was a self-employed lorry driver who owned his means of production, a medium-size lorry. Under an orthodox Marxist definition, he was a petty bourgeois rather than a proletarian. My mother worked as a family worker in my grandmother's barbershop. Nevertheless, our standard of living and community life were similar to those of the working class. My family background did create my interest in this research on marginal labour, but it did not have a significant impact on my political consciousness and values. Neither of my parents has belonged to any trade union, nor was inclined to any particular political ideology.

My social and political awareness was kindled during my adolescence. When I was still a secondary student in the mid-1970s, I was greatly influenced by the radical student movement, which was under the leadership of a Maoist

group. As one of the youngest followers of this patriotic socialist movement, like many university students, Marxism and Maoism became my political perspective, or more precisely my cherished values. Not only had my peers and I studied theories of Marx and Mao, but had also been keen on embracing social reality. I actively participated and organised a series of 'visiting the poor to learn their bitterness' programmes. I went to visit fishermen, farmers and workers. It was my very first experience of social studies or investigation. On the one hand I was deeply touched by the inequality and injustice which I met; whereas on the other hand, I also learned that most of the poor were quite 'satisfied' and happy with their present situation. To me, the revolutionary potential of the poor in Hong Kong was a romantic ideal rather than a social reality.

Rejecting the dogma that social service is reactionary rather than revolutionary, we started to organise some social services for the poor, for example, tutorial and playgroups for children, winter-clothes collection etc. Perhaps this experience of direct service to common people has consolidated my humanitarian belief that the true meaning of life is to help the needy and to advocate a better society. It became my cherished value which caused me to forsake an opportunity to study computer science in Australia (which was an ideal prospect for many other science students in Hong Kong). Instead I was determined to study social work in Hong Kong.

As Part of the Social World

I entered the Chinese University of Hong Kong as a social work student in 1980. At the same time, after the downfall of the Gang of Four in 1976 and particularly after the victory of Deng Xiao Ping's pragmatic ideology in 1979, propaganda in China was turned upside down. All goodness became evil; while all truth became lies. It created an ideological crisis for most followers of Mao, including me. Many of them felt being cheated and lost their confidence in Marxism and Maoism. The student movement had completely died away when I entered the Chinese University.

During my undergraduate study, I consciously intended to deconstruct and reconstruct my values, theory and ideology. I exposed myself to a wide range of theories from left to right. I joined some left-wing student self-study groups on Neo-Marxism to study works of the Frankfurt schools, Althusser and Gramsci. Although we could not agree in most of our endless discussions, I became aware of the pluralistic nature of theories inside the Marxist camp. We also restudied contemporary Chinese history from new perspectives which revealed that the history of the Chinese Communist Party was a history of ideology and power struggles.

Gradually, my dogmatic Marxist view was replaced by a more pluralistic and basically humanistic Marxist view. Acceptance of a pluralistic view marked the end of my ideology crisis, but still I felt uneasiness. I doubted any single theory or ideology which claimed to be the ultimate truth.

However, I still had a strong eagerness to find the truth, but did not know whether it existed or not.

In order to understand the perspective and theory from the right, I intentionally took Economics, which was dominated by the Neoclassical school, as my minor subject. I should admit that the individualistic perspective, proposed by Hayek and Popper, has launched some powerful attacks on the collective perspective and teleological historical assumption of the left.

Having read a lot of different theories, I felt confused rather than convinced. Not only did the left disagree with the right, but also the 'classical theory' was replaced with successive 'neo-theory', and successive 'neo-theory' was then replaced by 'neo-neo-theory'. I had never reconstructed a consistent and convincing ideology.

Facing the anarchy in theory, I returned to practice to find the answer to the meaning of life. In my second and third year of study, I became a leader in the student union and took an active part in social and political affairs. I still stressed the importance of embracing social reality and not merely conducting debates and discussions inside the ivory tower of the university. To understand China through ourselves but not as part of an official arrangement, I organised a one-year project to understand the life and ideology of youth in China by conducting interviews in the streets and parks in *Guangzhou*, the biggest city in southern China. I had also organised various visits to the Vietnamese refugee camps and temporary housing areas for the new Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong to understand their situation and problems. For me, social reality has

provided an even more pluralistic picture than the one described by theories. I felt substantial tension between theory and reality.

I was looking for something which could bridge the gap between theory and reality. I was still inclined to approach the problem from the end of reality by practice but not from the end of theory by study. Furthermore I faced certain financial burdens to support my family as my father had retired early; thus I started to work after my graduation. At that time I did not suppose that I would continue any postgraduate studies.

After my graduation, I first became a social worker in a youth centre and then worked as an assistant to one of the first generation of elected Legislative Councillors in Hong Kong, Mr. Tam Yiu Chung, who represented the functional constituency of labour. I was then transferred to the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions to be an executive secretary responsible for social and labour affairs. After several years of work, I discovered that my state of ideology had changed from uneasiness to indifference. I then considered that I should refresh my view and theory, especially those about labour, in order to have a new input in the labour movement.

As a Member of the Intelligensia

I decided to study an MA course in comparative labour studies in the sociology department at Warwick University in 1988. I highly enjoyed and valued that year of study which gave me the possibility of escaping from routine work and of absorbing new ideas and reviewing the old ones. Most of

the staff in labour studies belonged to the radical school but had significant differences among them. Debates among different staff in the seminars were stimulating and provided a useful insight and pluralistic perspective for me in understanding labour issues. I was deeply impressed and certainly influenced by the pluralistic but radical tradition of labour studies at Warwick.

After my studies, I spent another three years in setting up a labour education centre in Hong Kong. For the sake of developing teaching and study material, I had to find out and establish data support about labour in Hong Kong. However, to my disappointment, I found that there was little research in Hong Kong which was done by working people, on working people, and for working people. Without theoretical guidance, many front-line labour organisers easily got lost. To maintain the life of existing organisations and movements became their first priority. Therefore, I preferred to apply myself to theoretical research rather than direct organising. Under such considerations, I returned to Warwick to start my PhD study.

The PhD programme provided me with some stimuli different from my MA study. All PhD students in my department were required to attend a series of seminars which were mainly for the discussion of research methodology and philosophy. Generally speaking, many tutors of these seminars came from the tradition of ethnographic studies on education and health settings, which were quite different from those of labour studies. This ethnographic tradition stresses the importance of understanding the subjective world of the agent and generating grounded theory by participatory and vigorous observation.

As I have already said, I have been greatly influenced by the Marxist or radical tradition which underlines the importance of understanding social phenomena in the light of its underlying structure. I also believe that a researcher should have a critical manner towards these structures. It was the basic assumption of my original research proposal, in which I merely considered using comparative research, mainly literature reviews, to understand the underlying structure of the rise and growth of marginal workers. To me, an understanding of the structure should not just be a mental game by the intelligentsia; rather it should provide a necessary insight for the workers and the underprivileged to change their subordinate position and unequal situation. My choice of a comparative study at the macro level is undoubtedly affected by such a radical philosophy and values.

However, my experience in embracing social reality and organising labour made me understand the pluralistic nature of a social phenomenon. My service experiences are actually based on humanitarian values which have driven me to understand people's problems from their eyes, not from the views of the elite. These humanitarian values are echoed by the ethnographic school and other qualitative methodology advocates. Having accepted the worth of the individualistic approach, I chose the oral history method as a complementary method to understand the research questions from the agent's viewpoint.

Nevertheless, I still feel the tension between analyses at macro and micro levels and between philosophies of materialistic historicism and

symbolic interaction. I cannot help wondering if these methods and philosophy can really be integrated in a single research by an individual researcher. I doubt whether I can organically combine the best of both approaches or just mix them superficially in a schizophrenic way. With the mentioned awareness and tensions in mind, I have tried my best to integrate methods and philosophy in this research, as I agree that writing up a PhD thesis is primarily a learning process of how to conduct such research.

Chapter 3

Reasons for the Rise of Marginal Workers

In this chapter, I will review and synthesise different theories expounding the structural causes of the emergence and rise of marginal workers. Various interrelated debates have been initiated to try to understand the structural changes of capitalism since the 1970s: the NIDL/CIDL debate, the post-Fordist/flexible accumulation debate, the regulation/unorganised debate, and finally the labour process/deskilling debate.¹

These debates have enhanced and deepened our understanding of the continuous and dynamic changes of capitalism. However, they were only partially successful as most of them identified the contemporary changes of capitalism from a single angle, either from a global perspective or from a perspective at the enterprise level. Furthermore, the level of regional political economy is overlooked.² I would like to synthesise them in order to explain the marginalisation of workers in Britain and Hong Kong.

Firstly, I will introduce the NIDL/CIDL and the post-Fordist/flexible accumulation debates at the global level in order to analyse the relationship

¹ For a summary of various debates under different labels, see Rubery and Wilkinson (1994): Introduction; Arrighi (1994): Introduction.

² Cohen has made a critical comment on this point. Please refer to Cohen (1987).

between the migration of capital and unemployment in the two regions.

Secondly, I will elaborate the theories of 'strong' and 'weak' states as well as the regulation school in order to study the regional political economy and the formation of the super-states. In the following analysis, Britain will be analysed as a member of the EC, whereas Hong Kong will be studied in the context of its political and economic reunification with China. The EC and southern China are treated as the 'regional political economies' in analysing how the formation of a state/super-state has contributed to the rise of marginal workers in Britain and Hong Kong.

Thirdly, I will discuss the arguments about labour processes/deskilling at an enterprise level to assess the development of capitalism from a micro perspective. In the three levels of analysis, I will not only present a theoretical review, but also identify the changes that have taken place in Britain and Hong Kong.

The Global Level: Migration of Capital

The globalisation of the world economy, the incorporation of new countries into the world system, and the accelerated migration of capital in the form of foreign direct investment by the Transnational Corporations (TNCs), have all facilitated the establishment of an integrated international production system, now called the 'Changing International Division of Labour' (CIDL). The extensive migration of capital is cited as the major reason for the marginalisation of world labour, both in the developed

countries and in the Third World. Some argue that it marks the end of the era of Fordist accumulation and epitomises flexible accumulation as the hallmark of the post-Fordist era. However, the flexibility of capitalism is not new. Although the appearance of capitalism has changed, the essence of it – flexibility and eclecticism – remains unchanged. We should understand the current transformation of capitalism as being a specific stage of its development to achieve greater liquidity, flexibility, and freedom of choice.

From New to Changing International Divisions of Labour

The original idea of the New International Division of Labour (NIDL) was developed by a study of a group of German academics on structural unemployment in industrialised countries and the concomitant industrialisation in developing countries (Frobel et al. 1980). According to Frobel and his colleagues,

the primacy given to investment for rationalisation instead of for expansion in the western industrialised countries implies increased 'mobility' for workers. More and more workers are losing not only their jobs but also their acquired profession as a result of rationalisation schemes. They are thrown onto the labour market where, because they lack relevant qualifications or training, they are obliged to sell their labour-power as unskilled or semiskilled workers at considerably worse terms than before.

(Frobel et al.. 1980: 3)

The NIDL theorists explain such marginalisation and mass unemployment of workers in the West as a result of the out-migration of production capital, especially those engaged in labour-intensive production

processes, from developed to developing countries. The main characteristics of NIDL are the emergence of a world market of labour, a worldwide industrial reserve army and a world market for production sites. Following the division of labour theory of Babbage, Frobel et al. (1980) demonstrate that the relocation process is not just a result of the wage differential between the two regions, but also one of capital regaining or rebuilding control over labour. Babbage's theory proposes that an increased division of labour fragments the labour process so that skilled labour is replaced by unskilled cheap labour. It follows that capital can exert greater control over workers. The hypothesis that capital wants to increase its power of control by deskilling labour and fragmenting the labour process is also supported by the deskilling theory, which focuses on the changes at the micro/enterprise level.

The NIDL theorists sought to challenge the assumption of neo-classical economists that wage differentials are the sole reason for the relocation of capital. However, NIDL theorists have still been criticised for denying the centrality of the struggle between capital and labour and for neglecting the formation and reproduction of class and class structures (Jenkins 1984). Cohen (1987) also attacks the vague concept of the term 'NIDL'. Cohen argues that the different meanings of the 'division of labour' make it more preferable to account for the division of labour by measuring the changes in the structure and utilisation of the labour force rather than measuring the changes in the circulation of capital and the distribution of production activities.

Furthermore, Cohen suggests that the spatial division of labour between production and product is not 'new' and has evolved in four successive phases: the mercantile, industrial, imperial and transnational divisions of labour, differentiated by the different mixed forms of free and unfree labour employed. Cohen thus coins the term 'Changing International Division of Labour' (CIDL) to replace the old label 'NIDL'. The basic difference between the NIDL and CIDL theorists is that the latter shift the focus of analysis from the sphere of production to the sphere of production relations. Moreover, the empirical base also extends from the limited experience of the few NICs to the more complex phenomenon of the international division of labour between the core, semi-periphery and periphery.

Southall (1988) directs the NIDL focus from the 'free' migration of capital to the crucial role of the state. He suggests that the 'global expansion of capital and the transnationalisation of production requires and generates repressive political institutions and social formations in the Third World whose role is to educate, discipline and mobilise the potential and actual labour force for servitude' (Southall 1988: 12). Southall argues that due to the dictates of the international mobility of capital, the peripheral states (the highly repressive regimes in the NICs) maximise their attractiveness as sites for investment by minimising the cost of labour and ensuring its quiescence and adaptability. Refining Southall's argument, I would argue that both the peripheral states (e.g. Hong Kong) and the core states (e.g. Britain) have been

engaged in the process of maximising attractiveness to encourage the investment of capital.

Sassen-Koob (1987) correlates the migration of labour and capital together under the restructuring of capital in the World System. The labour flows are associated with worldwide trends in the recomposition of capital. The new labour migrations to the core and the new migrations within the periphery are interconnected with the different movements of the circuit of the migration of capital. Labour migrations to the core are associated with the recomposition of the economic structure of the old centres of the world economy, which are now in decline. Labour migrations to the periphery are associated with the relocation of manufacturing and clerical activities to selected peripheral areas. The regional concentration of these activities and their labour intensive character maximise the impact on people, promoting an internal migration to the new industrial zones. This provides the basic theoretical explanation for the huge migration of labour and capital between Hong Kong and the *Zhujiang* Delta Region (ZJDR).

All in all, the similarity between the NIDL and CIDL theorists is that both of them focus on the changes in the spatial configuration of the processes of capital accumulation which show the enhanced geographical mobility of capital and labour since the 1970s (Cohen 1987; Sassen 1988). However, the CIDL theorists argue that the relocation of the production process is not new, but as old as capitalism itself. The current restructuring of capitalism is only a specific form of a longer historical process of the development of capitalism.

The Migration of Capital: Evidence from the Data of Foreign Direct Investment

The NIDL theorists mainly focus on the migration of capital from the developed countries to the NICs in the form of production capital in the 1970s. However, the migration of capital in the global context in the 1980s and 1990s demonstrates different features. Firstly, the recipients of capital flow from the developed countries are mainly the developed countries themselves rather than the NICs. Secondly, the nature of capital migration from the developed countries is not mainly production capital but circulation capital, that is, service, financial and business capital. Thirdly, the form of investment changes from 'green-field' investment — creating new plant or enterprise — to 'mergers and acquisitions' investment. Fourthly, there also exists capital migration from the NICs to the New Newly Industrialised Countries (NNICs)³ to grasp the opportunities of deregulation and privatisation in these countries (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) 1996; Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) 1997).

Investment flows in the global economy are concentrated in a few countries. Most Foreign Direct Investment⁴ (FDI) outflows originate from and are directed to developed countries. Five home countries (France,

³ The NNICs are those countries which have just recently adopted an export-oriented manufacturing strategy to join the NICs. In Asia, NNICs include Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines.

⁴ The magnitude and migration of capital can be measured by the statistics of the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the global economy. FDI includes all forms of investment from the home country to the host country but excludes investment in the form of loans.

Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States) accounted for two-thirds of total outflows between 1980 and 1995. About 50-55 per cent of the outflows from these countries during the second half of the 1980s was in the services sector. In recent years, developing countries have received, on average, less than 20 per cent of worldwide FDI inflows. In fact, the share of average annual investment inflows in developing countries fell from 26 to 17 per cent between the periods 1981-1985 and 1986-1990 (UNCTAD 1996).

The Case of Britain

**Table 3.1: Annual Average Changes in Foreign Direct Investment
(FDI) of UK, 1971-1990**

Annual average	FDI Outflows (US\$ million)	FDI Inflows (US\$ million)	Net FDI lost (outflows- inflows) (US\$ million)
1971-1980	+955	+864	+91
1981-1985	-125	-929	+804
1986-1990	+1,763	+5,391	-3628
1991-1995	+25,000	+17,000	+8,000

Source: UNCTAD (1996) *World Investment Report 1996*, Annex 1 & 2.

From 1971 to 1980, capital outflows and inflows were both increasing in Britain, but the increase in outflows was greater than inflows by 91 US\$ million per annum. It shows that the aggregate effect was a steady out-

migration of capital from Britain. In the same period, the unemployment rate of Britain also surged from 3.9 per cent in 1971 to 11.1 per cent in 1981.⁵

From 1981 to 1985, the magnitude of capital outflows and inflows decreased tremendously owing to an economic recession in Britain and in the rest of the world. However, the decrease of inflows was much higher than the decrease of outflows. It illustrates the fact that due to the absence of the inflow of capital from other developed countries, Britain faced a faster rate of aggregate out-migration of capital. Facing the decreasing inflows of capital and its own recession, Britain's unemployment rate experienced another strong increase. In 1986, the unemployment rate reached its peak level of 11.7 per cent.

The period between 1986 to 1990 witnessed not only a significant increase in the outflows of capital but also a tremendous increase in the inflows of capital. It may be due to the fact that the formation of the EU attracted inflows of capital which wanted to by-pass trade barriers. This also supported the formation of a regional political economy, which induced economic changes in the UK. We will discuss later in the section on the regional political economy how the Thatcher government intended to defeat organised labour to attract investment. The tremendous increase of inflows of capital resulted in a remarkable decrease of the net out-migration of capital from Britain. Britain had become a net-capital inflow country with a 3.6 US

⁵ The unemployment rate quoted in this section is adapted from the unemployment rate (claimant figures) of the UK reported in various issues of 'Department of Employment Gazette', 'Employment Gazette' and 'Labour Force Trends' published by the Department of Employment, UK.

\$billion inflow per year from 1986 to 1990. During those five years, the unemployment rate in Britain decreased from 11.7 per cent to 5.6 per cent.

From 1991 to 1995, both inflows and outflows of FDI increased significantly. While outflows of FDI increased from 16 billion USD in 1991 to 37 billion USD in 1995, the inflows increased less vigorously from 16 to 30 billion USD in the same period. During the early 1990s, the direction of capital flows is the opposite of that of the late 1980s. The out-migration of capital from the UK is out-weighed by the in-migration from other countries with a net capital loss at an annual average of 8 billion USD per annum. The trend in the unemployment rate also stopped decreasing and started increasing again. The unemployment rate increased sharply from 5.6 per cent in 1990 to 10.2 per cent in 1993. After the economic recession in the early 1990s, the net-outflow of capital from Britain decreased with a concomitant decrease in the unemployment rate after 1994.

Table 3.2: UK FDI Outward and Inward Stock and It's Share in World Total, 1980-1995

	FDI outward stock <i>US\$ billion</i>			FDI inward stock <i>US\$ billion</i>		
	UK	World Total	% of UK in World	UK	World Total	% of UK in World
1980	80	513	15.6%	63	482	13.1%
1985	100	685	14.6%	64	735	8.7%
1990	230	1,684	13.7%	218	1,717	12.7%
1995	319	2,730	11.7%	244	2,658	9.2%

Source: UNCTAD (1996) *World Investment Report 1996*, Annex 3 & 4.

In conclusion, the magnitude and the direction of the migration of capital in Britain were synchronised with the changes in the unemployment rate from the 1970s up to the present. From Table 3.2, we learn that the share of the UK FDI outward stock in the world decreased steadily from 15.6 per cent in 1980 to 11.7 per cent in 1995, while its percentage of FDI inward stock in the world total was much more volatile, in accordance with the economic climate in the world economy. Therefore, it is not the increasing out-migration of capital from Britain, but the decreasing and fluctuating in-migration of capital from other countries, which seems to be a crucial factor in determining the level of unemployment in the UK. This supports the NIDL theory. However, contrary to the hypothesis of the NIDL, the host countries of capital out-migration are other developed countries, not the NICs. Moreover, capital is now migrating in the form of circulation (finance and service) capital rather than in the form of production capital.

The Case of Hong Kong

Both the 'miracle' economic success of Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s and its rapid de-industrialisation since the 1980s can be understood from the perspective of the CIDL, emphasising the role of Hong Kong in the regional political economy and the world system. The CIDL on a global scale and the resultant relocation of production in the 1950s made it possible for local export-oriented manufacturing, given its labour-intensive nature, to be competitive in international markets (Lui and Chiu 1993). Moreover, the formation of the international subcontracting network (mainly in the garment and electronic products industries) has facilitated the incorporation

of Hong Kong into the world system through the TNCs (Dicken 1986; Germidis 1980; Henderson and Cohen 1982; Lui and Chiu 1993).

With the advent of economic reforms in China in 1979, Hong Kong's economy has been gradually integrating with the economy of southern China, especially the ZJDR. Most of the manufacturing industries in Hong Kong have relocated their production to China to avail themselves of the cheap labour and rent there (Chiu et al. 1997).

De-industrialisation in Hong Kong became significant and rapid after the early 1990s. Employment in the manufacturing sector as a percentage of total employment decreased from 47 per cent in 1971, to 41.3 per cent in 1981 and further to 35.8 per cent in 1986. In 1986, the number of workers employed in manufacturing industry was 946,653. It was still the largest type of industry in Hong Kong in terms of workers employed. However, owing to the continuous outflow of production capital, employees in manufacturing industry decreased to 574,867 in 1996, representing about 18.9 per cent of total employed persons in Hong Kong.⁶

⁶ Figures are quoted from Census and Statistics Department (1997) *1996 Population By-Census Main Report*, p.82.

Table 3.3: Estimated Value and Proportion of Outward Processing Trade between Hong Kong and China, 1990-1995

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Total exports to China						
(million HKD)	91,914	113,931	141,639	160,178	181,179	217,612
(%)	(58.8%)	(55.5%)	(52.4%)	(47.9%)	(47.7%)	(48.6%)
Imports from China						
(million HKD)	145,103	197,384	254,013	295,203	354,912	399,567
(%)	(61.8%)	(67.6%)	(72.1%)	(73.8%)	(75.4%)	(74.4%)
Re-exports of China Origin (except to China)						
(million HKD)	NA	221,450	299,833	364,536	422,544	492,461
(%)		(74.1%)	(78.3%)	(80.8%)	(82.0%)	(82.2%)

Notes: Figures in brackets show the proportion in percentage terms of estimated outward processing trade in overall trade between Hong Kong and China.

Source: Census and Statistics Department (1996) *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics 1996 Edition*, p.47.

Outward processing (OP) is the process whereby raw materials or semi-manufactures from or through Hong Kong are exported to China for processing, with a contractual arrangement for subsequent re-importation of the processed goods into Hong Kong. Between 1989 and 1994, the average annual growth rates of OP values as a percentage of total exports, domestic exports and re-exports to China were 18.7 per cent, 5.6 per cent and 25.4 per cent respectively. With reference to Table 3.3, the OP proportion of total exports to China experienced a steady decline between 1990 and 1995 (from 58.8% to 48.6%), however the OP values of exports maintained an upward trend, increasing significantly from HKD 91,914 million in 1990 to HKD

217,612 million in 1995. Moreover, the percentage of OP values of imports from China steadily increased between 1990 to 1995 (from 61.8% to 74.4%); as did the percentage of OP values of re-exports of China origin (from 74.1% in 1991 to 82.2% in 1995).

These trends signify that production facilities and market channels have become more developed in China so that the OP process is now more independent in seeking raw materials, machines and resources from sources other than Hong Kong. In fact the reverse is happening. Hong Kong is now more dependent on the production process of China in its economic relationship with China. Hong Kong no longer merely acts as an entrepôt for trading with China, but as a secondary world city to export to the rest of the world products which are manufactured in China.

The importance of Hong Kong capital in financing China's rapid industrialisation and facilitating the integration of southern China into the world system can be reflected by the major share Hong Kong capital has in the total foreign investment in China. Referring to Table 3.4, Hong Kong capital is the most important single investor in China. Investments from Hong Kong (and Macau)⁷ accounted for 62.3 per cent (38,518 US\$ millions) of total implemented foreign investment in China from 1979 to 1993. (Kwan 1994).

⁷ Hong Kong and Macau are lumped as a single region in the statistics of FDI in China, however, most of the FDI has come from Hong Kong.

**Table 3.4: Foreign Direct Investment in China by Countries,
1979-1993 (cumulative)**

	US\$ million	
Country	Contracted	Implemented
Hong Kong/Macau	148,119	38,518
Taiwan	18,437	5,055
United States	14,660	5,237
Japan	6,934	5,203
United Kingdom	3,012	576
South Korea	2,173	550
Germany	1,458	527
Australia	1,245	338
Canada	1,815	260
France	920	602
Total ^a	221,697	61,869

^a Total amount included FDI from other countries

Source: Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, China.

Quoted from Kwan (1994).

All of the above facts support the general thesis of the NIDL that production capital migrates from high wage to low wage countries. However, the real migration processes are much more complex than the abstract model. In the case of capital migration between Hong Kong and China, the flow is not unidirectional. Capital migrates from Hong Kong to China and vice versa. It is obvious that significant amounts of capital also flow from China to Hong Kong. In 1994, China surpassed Japan and became the second largest capital exporter country into Hong Kong. In 1994, the stock of FDI from China was HKD 96.0 million.⁸

⁸ Source: Census and Statistics Department (1995) *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics 1994*.

Capital from China can be divided into three categories: namely investment in the service sector, 'round-tripping' investment, and hot-money investment⁹. It is interesting to note the importance of round-tripping investment between Hong Kong and China, which is one of the reasons for the huge amount of investment from Hong Kong to China. Round-tripping investment refers to domestic investment made under the guise of foreign investment which is aimed at taking advantage of fiscal (tax-reduction, low-tariff) and other benefits available to foreign investors (export quotas) in a given country (Kwan 1994).

A rising proportion of FDI in China is believed to be of this nature: investment capital originating in China, flowing to Hong Kong and then re-entering China as foreign investment. Round-tripping investment from and to China via Hong Kong does not involve a net flow of funds between China and Hong Kong. Therefore, the magnitude of capital outflows from Hong Kong is much smaller than the nominal figure.

All in all, the out-migration of production capital from Hong Kong to China supports the general thesis of CIDL that production capital migrates from high wage areas to low wage areas and that the out-migration of capital has created unemployment in the host country. However, the flow of capital is not so simplistic and uni-directional. Capital (most of it belongs to provincial governments or large state enterprises) from socialist China also

⁹ Hot-money investment is a highly mobile investment, which grasps every opportunity to earn extremely large profits in the high-risk financial market. Due to its high-risk, the hot-money investment may lose extremely large sums of money all of a sudden.

utilises every opportunity flowing from the deregulation and denationalisation process in China.

The above analysis of the inflows and outflows of capital in Britain and Hong Kong shows that the logic of the flow of capital is guided by a single principle – to earn as much profit as possible. The cross investments among the ‘triangles’: USA, Japan, and Europe; the ‘round-tripping investment’ from China to Hong Kong; the increasing fragmentation of the production/circulation process of the TNCs; and the easy-turn direction of capital flows, all signify the essence of capitalism, that is, ‘adaptation’ and ‘eclecticism’ as suggested by Braudel (1982: 433). Capital flows from high-wage areas to low-wage ones, or from North to South, while investors will grasp every opportunity to increase their profit and flexibility. It reveals that the thesis of the NIDL illustrates only one specific phase of capitalism. We will discuss this in detail in the next section.

The Flexibility & Eclecticism of Capitalism

The restructuring of capitalism, going on since the 1970s according to Arrighi, should be understood as a phase of discontinuous change, which is typical rather than atypical of the history of capitalism. Arrighi (1994) argues that ‘long periods of crisis, restructuring and reorganisation, in short, of discontinuous change, have been far more typical of the history of the capitalist world-economy than those brief moments of generalised expansion’ (1994: 1). Arrighi asserts that the current transition from Fordism to ‘flexible accumulation’ can be understood in two theoretical traditions: first, Fernand

Braudel's argument that the essential feature of historical capitalism has been 'flexibility' and 'eclecticism' (Braudel 1982); and Karl Marx's general formula of capital: $M-C-M^*$, which can be read both in a micro and a macro perspective.

Braudel contends that an essential feature of the general history of capitalism is 'its unlimited flexibility, its capacity for change and *adaptation*' (1982: 433). Braudel also suggests that '*eclecticism*' rather than concrete forms are the general characteristics of capitalism. The distinctive advantage is 'not having confined oneself to a single choice, of being eminently adaptable, hence non-specialised' (1982: 381).

Braudel's thesis is supported by Marx's formula $M-C-M^*$. Arrighi summarises and interprets Marx's formula as follows: 'Money capital (M) means liquidity, flexibility, freedom of choice. Commodity capital (C) means capital invested in a particular input-output combination in view of a profit. Hence it means concreteness, rigidity, and a narrowing down or closing of options. M^* means *expanded* liquidity, flexibility, and freedom of choice' (1994: 5) (original stress). Arrighi also suggests that the formula, at a micro level, means that capitalist agencies invest money as a means to an end of securing an even greater flexibility and freedom of choice at some future point; and that, at a macro level, the formula represents a recurrent pattern of historical capitalism as a world system. The central aspect of this pattern is the alternation of epochs of material expansion (M-C phase) with phases of financial rebirth and expansion (C- M^* phase).

Post-Fordist Era: Flexible Accumulation

According to Arrighi, the world capitalist system is now experiencing the C-M* phase – from ‘Fordism’ to ‘Flexible Accumulation’ – the financial rebirth and expansion of capitalism. For Fordism, the system of the organisation of labour has been linked to the system of industrial production at both a macro and a micro level. At the macro level Fordism wanted labour to benefit from increasing productivity, to ensure an expanding demand for products (Aglietta 1979). It was argued that this relationship was assured through the development of wage-determination systems, which provided for steadily rising real wages in line with productivity. The search for an accommodation to post-Fordist conditions led to a fragmentation of wage-determination systems, reflecting a more fragmented and unstable system of industrial production.

Harvey (1987) claims that the transformation of Fordism to flexible accumulation is inevitable. According to him, flexible accumulation is a direct confrontation with the rigidities of Fordism. The new form of capital accumulation rests on flexibility with respect to labour processes, labour markets, products and patterns of consumption. Agreeing with NIDL and CIDL theorists, Harvey claims that ‘time-space compression’ has enhanced the powers of flexibility and mobility and has allowed employers to exert stronger pressures of labour control through high unemployment.

In the post-Fordist era, flexible accumulation, which is one of the fundamental reasons for the marginalisation of workers in the global context,

has become the dominant mode of accumulation in the world capitalist system. Moreover, Fordism represents not only a micro system of labour organisation, but also a macro system of social political formations of Keynesianism, welfarism and corporatism (Clarke 1988). Therefore, in the post-Fordist era, this new flexible accumulation also requires the state to perform roles different from those in the Fordist era.

The Regional and Nation Levels: State Intervention

Capital is not operating in a social and political vacuum, without any restrictions on its free will to migrate to gain profit. The migration of capital mainly operates in an 'inter-national' context. Both individual nation states and the newly forming super-state (e.g. the EU) contribute to the current changes of capitalism and the marginalisation of workers.

Two contradicting hypotheses have been suggested – the 'strong state' thesis vs. the 'weak state' thesis – in accounting for the contemporary changes of capitalism. The strong state thesis proposes that the state plays an active role in lowering labour costs, in reducing the rigidity set by organised labour, in curbing the power of the union and the risk of strikes in order to attract investment from both foreign and local capital (Arrighi 1994; Castells and Henderson 1987). On the contrary, the weak state thesis suggests that Fordism fades out as states become weaker and weaker in handling conflicts between capital and labour, and conflicts between different sections of capital and labour. Offe (1985) and Lash and Urry (1987), supporters of the weak

state thesis, have declared the end of 'organised capitalism' and the emergence of 'disorganised capitalism'. They insist that the increasing spatial and functional deconcentration and decentralisation of corporate power has substituted the conscious regulation of national economies by capital and government officials.

The French 'regulation school' takes a different stand, which focuses on the changing roles of the state. They do not involve themselves in the debate of whether the state is strong or weak. They merely consider the 'state' as just part of the parcel – a regime of accumulation. The French regulation school has interpreted current changes in the mode of production of capitalism as a structural crisis of the Fordist-Keynesian 'regime of accumulation' (Boyer and Durand 1997; Peck and Tickell 1995). The Fordist-Keynesian regime describes a particular phase of capitalist development characterised by investments in fixed capital for regular increases in productivity and mass consumption. For this potential to be realised, adequate governmental policies and actions, social institutions, and norms and habits of behaviour (the 'mode of regulation') are required. 'Keynesianism' is described as the mode of regulation that has enabled the emergent Fordist regime to realise its potential fully. It happens that this in turn is considered as the cause of the 1970s economic crisis (Aglietta 1979; Lipietz 1986, 1987).

The 'Strong' State: Britain under Thatcherism

The significance of the Thatcher era is that Margaret Thatcher and her allies attempted to reorganise the basis of conservative hegemony in the

British state. For fifty years, an important part of that hegemony had been the social democratic compromise. The labour movement was successfully neutralised through a reorganisation of the state collectivist welfare programmes and the protection of basic trade-union rights.

Thatcher judged that these concessions were no longer necessary and had become damaging to the state's authority, and that Conservative hegemony could be reestablished on a new foundation. The free economy and the strong state are a doctrine and also a political project. The advocacy of the free market is not in conflict with the state being strong. On the contrary, it is the attempt to restore the free market that has highlighted once more the authority of the state. Thatcher successfully came into power by promising that trade union power had to be destroyed if the decline of Britain was to be reversed and the authority of the state restored (Gamble 1994).

At the beginning, although the Thatcher government had the vision to become a 'strong' state, in practice the actions of the state were limited by the economic and political environment. The main target of the Thatcher government was to bring down inflation by monetary means during the first phase of the Thatcher governance from 1979 to 1982. The control and reduction of public expenditure were an essential part of this cure. In 1979, the Thatcher government proposed the withdrawal of supplementary benefits for strikers' families, the taxing of unemployment benefit, and new increases in prescription charges, excise duties and petrol revenue tax. Gamble (1994) suggests that in this first phase, the Thatcher government initially moved

extremely cautiously in industrial relations and in nationalised industry policies. The first Trade Union Bill was passed in 1980, but there was only a modest degree of control over union power.

However, in the second phase, that is from 1982 to 1987, the central government was more confident of its power and became involved in major confrontations with local councils, and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). The Thatcher government was determined to use its control over nationalised industries to force them to become profitable. The defeat of the miners' strike, that had lasted eleven months in 1984, signified the Thatcher government's tough stand to the whole labour movement. The Thatcher government did everything to restructure industries and to make them profitable and internationally competitive. The more profitable the nationalised industries, the more attractive would the industries be to potential buyers from private capital, both locally and internationally. From 1982 to 1987, major public companies, including British Telecom, British Gas and British Airways were denationalised.

Reducing union power and privileges was given a very high priority in this second phase of the Thatcher government. Two further pieces of legislation were introduced in 1982 and 1984, aimed at restricting union rights and opening their funds to claims for damages. The government imposed strict pay curbs in the public sector through cash limits, and showed itself ready to meet and defeat any strike in the public sector. The government also

made it clear that what it sought was either union-free companies or single-company unions with no-strike agreements.

These new forms in the system of industrial relations were foreshadowed in the experiments promoted by some of the Japanese companies, such as Nissan. These pieces of legislation and policies limited the power of organised labour and demoralised the trade union movement. The outcome is that capitalists had more power in the hiring-and-firing of their employees, in substituting full-time staff by part-timers, in carrying out flexible management policies, and in relocating their production spaces or time. The increase in the unchecked authority of capital signified the greatest marginalisation of British workers since the 1970s. Without the rising authority of the strong state, this rising authority of capital would not have been possible.

Another impact of the Thatcher government, which had been the largest employer in Britain, was brought about by their efforts to marginalise employees like teachers and health workers in the national services, as well as cleaners and porters in local government. In the 1987 manifesto, Thatcherites saw the reconstruction of public services as the essential task in refashioning the British state and British civil society. The main reconstruction proposals were geared at education, health, social security and the financing of local government. However, they were allied to what has become known as the 'new public management' – a set of ideas for managing all institutions in the public sector and involving devices such as internal markets, contracting out,

tendering and financial incentives. All these policies have contributed to the marginalisation of employees in the public sector.

Blanchflower and Richard (1994) assert that the labour market reforms under the Thatcher government were designed to weaken the power of unions, to enhance the rewards of work relative to unemployment and other non-work-related benefits, to reduce government/institutional influences on market outcomes, and to expand self-employment. A rise in self-employment in Britain after the 1980s was one of the conscious efforts of the Thatcher government.

All of the above features of Thatcherism are not just a product of the personal, charismatic, and accidental influence of Margaret Thatcher on British socio-economic-politics. Again, nor would its influence just end after the defeat of the Conservative Party in the last general election. The Labour Party, led by Tony Blair, is following a rather similar set of policies to that set by the Thatcher government. The 'regulationist' approach of the British state is not a product of a single party. It is, however, as the French regulation school says, 'part' of the parcel. The British state is really part of a regime of regulation, which is directed against the unions and welfare recipients, but paradoxically at the same time reduces the state's economic power. We should conceive the British state as part of the process of capital accumulation. Furthermore we should understand that the British state's new mode of regulation is to solve the economic crisis resulting from under-investment by

checking the power of organised labour and lowering wage levels to attract global capital to invest in Britain.

The 'Weak' State: The Positive-noninterventionism of Hong Kong

Among the 'Four Little Dragons',¹⁰ government expenditure as a percentage of GDP is lowest in Hong Kong. Furthermore, there have not been any significant signs of the government's active intervention in the economy such as a nationalised industry, restrictions on the mobility of foreign and local capital, a Central Bank, or long term planning on economic development strategy. Relative to the other NIC governments, the state of Hong Kong is the weakest with reference to its self-restraint and limited powers of intervention in the market. Moreover, under the Basic Law, which is a minor constitution in force since July 1st, 1997, the government is obliged to maintain a low tax rate. Moreover, the fiscal system is confined by the Basic Law so that the government must spend less than its revenue. These make the Hong Kong government basically a 'small' and 'minimal' government.

Many neo-classical economists thus consider the Hong Kong government as an ideal model of a laissez-faire economy (Friedmann and Friedmann 1980). They believe that a 'weak' noninterventionist state is the best means of allowing the free market to regulate the economy and achieve

¹⁰ The 'Four Little Dragons' are Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea.

economic prosperity. However, this weak state thesis is only part of the truth and does not stand up to scrutiny. Other academics argue that the state of Hong Kong is not really weak and reactive, but strong and proactive (Castells et al. 1988; Schiffer 1984; Youngson 1983).

Officially the Hong Kong government's economic philosophy is 'positive noninterventionism' (Haddon-Cave 1984) rather than the *laissez-faire* philosophy as suggested by Friedmann and Friedmann (1980). The main difference between positive noninterventionism and *laissez-faire* is that under the former the government has certain quite specific 'obligations'.

The Hong Kong government claimed that its basic role in economic development was to provide minimal intervention, as the economy was self-regulating. However, the 'obligations' of minimal intervention could be expanded (or contracted) in view of the needs of the accumulation of the capital. Schiffer (1984) argues that the colonial state of Hong Kong has actively participated in the facilitation of economic growth. Castells et al. (1988) specifically identify the massive public-housing programme established in the 1950s as a crucial factor contributing to the success of manufacturing industries. Castells et al. argue that housing, being a collective consumption, if provided by the state, can lower the reproductive cost of workers. Therefore low cost housing serves the function of a 'social wage'. In other words the public-housing programme in Hong Kong has the effect of subsidising the wages of the low-wage population so that working-class families are able to survive on the low wages received from their employers, and the employers

are indirectly subsidised by the state to continue their pursuit of low-wage, labour-intensive manufacturing.

In 1998, after the Asian Financial Crisis, the Hong Kong government spent 118 billion HKD buying shares of the 'blue chip' companies in Hong Kong in order to rescue the stock market and defend the pegged exchange rate (Ta Kung Po 27/10/1998). Almost one sixth of all the financial reserves of the Hong Kong government was allocated to this single rescue action. As expected, this action received numerous attacks from neo-classical economists, who criticised the Hong Kong government for violating the guidelines of 'noninterventionism'.¹¹ However, these neo-classical economists missed the point that Hong Kong government has a track record of spending taxpayers' money to rescue various commercial banks in crisis e.g. Hang Lung Bank and Overseas Trust Bank. These extensive and direct interventions in the financial market show that the Hong Kong government sometimes acts as a 'strong' state, which contradicts the 'positive nonintervention' philosophy.

The role of the state, however, may be more evident in moments of crisis, when its regime of regulation no longer satisfies the changing needs of capital accumulation. Lui and Chiu (1993) claim that under the nonintervention banner, the indirect institutional and infrastructural intervention of the Hong Kong government is far from adequate to cope with problems arising from the process of industrial restructuring.

¹¹ For example, Alan Greenspan, chairman of the United States Federal Reserve and Charles Adams, deputy economist of IMF publicly criticised the intervention of Hong Kong government (Hong Kong Standard 23/9/1998).

The case of Hong Kong is characterised by small local manufacturing establishments under a noninterventionist state policy. The Hong Kong government would not support an individual industry or enterprise; whereas the other NIC governments, like Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea, are actively involved in strategic planning, training, and research and development activities. Hong Kong finds herself lagging behind in the technological upgrading of the export-oriented industry. Therefore, the survival strategy of small enterprises is to relocate their production processes to China and other southeast Asian countries rather than to retain their production base in Hong Kong by upgrading their technology level to compete with other NICs.

One of the reasons for the huge migration of capital from Hong Kong to China is the nonintervention of the colonial state. Confronted with increasing competition from southeast Asia and other NICs, and without the support of the state as significant as that in Singapore and Taiwan, Hong Kong's manufacturers (most of them are small and medium-sized enterprises) have a limited capability to upgrade their technology as compared with their competitors (Lui and Chiu 1993). Their survival strategy is to take advantage of the new availability of the massive supply of cheap labour and industrial land in southern China (Leung 1989; Maruya 1992).

In short, the Hong Kong government paradoxically acts as both a 'weak' and a 'strong' state, which performs contradictory functions as indeed

does the government in Britain. The regulation school can explain such a paradox by saying that the 'regime of regulation' is the product of the specific mode of accumulation in that country. Both the 'new right/neo-conservatism' of the Thatcher government since 1980s and the 'noninterventionism' of the Hong Kong government are part of the 'flexible mode' of capital accumulation.

The flexible mode of capital accumulation requires the state to reduce the rigidity of the labour market by cutting welfare and checking union power in Britain, whereas in Hong Kong it requires the state to act differently. Capital and labour in Hong Kong are highly unorganised and capital accumulation is extremely fluid and fast. It needs a state which is as flexible as its capital and labour. The Hong Kong government, in trying to accommodate itself to the rapid economic restructuring in Hong Kong, is in fact part of a flexible regime of regulation.

The basic role of the Hong Kong government is to allow production capital to change its products as well as its industries smoothly and quickly. Therefore, the government maintains its detachment from subsidising any one industry (Lui and Chiu 1993). Lacking long-term planning and a direction in social and economic development, the Hong Kong government helps to intensify the adverse effects of de-industrialisation. The marginalisation of labour in Hong Kong is really reinforced by the state's noninterventionism.

In summary, both the states in Britain and Hong Kong are neither strong nor weak. They both act simultaneously as strong states in lowering

the cost of labour and the rigidities that arise from the organisation of labour; and as a weak state in handling conflicts between capital and labour. Therefore, both of them experience self-contradictory roles. These facts support the arguments of the French 'regulation school' that the state is part of a parcel of 'a regime of accumulation'. We can see that the increasing collusion between capital and the state has made the state act for the benefit of capital and lose its 'relative autonomy'. The mode of regulation of both the states of Britain and Hong Kong has become explicit in protecting, maintaining and extending the interest of national and global capital. In the next section, I will discuss this expanding collusion between capital and the state in the formation of present super-states.

The Formation of a 'Super-State': The Regional Political Economy

Arrighi (1994) argues that 'the strategies and structures through which these leading agencies have promoted, organised and regulated the expansion of the restructuring of the capitalist world-economy is what we shall understand as a regime of accumulation on a world scale' (1994: 9). Arrighi argues that major material expansions have occurred only when a new dominant bloc has brought inter-state competition under control, thus ensuring minimal inter-state co-operation.

The major default of the above thesis is that there is one, and only one, super-state at any one time in the development of the world capitalist system. This model neglects the formation of the 'regional political economy'

-- the super-state at the regional level, which in fact is the reality in the 1980s and 1990s. This thesis of the enlarging role of a 'super' state as a political structure to control the social and political environment of capital accumulation supersedes the 'strong' or 'weak' state debates. In the late 1980s and the 1990s, we witnessed a fundamental change in the focus of 'inter'-national affairs towards the formation of super-national blocs like the EU or a free trade bloc like NAFTA, and the reunification of China and Hong Kong. All these signify the formation of a regional political economy, which shapes and controls the economic functions of individual states. The two cases of the formation of a regional political economy -- Britain and EU, Hong Kong and China -- provide useful insights about how the formation of a super-state would induce the marginalisation of workers.

Britain and the EU:

The 'Gate' of the Trade Barrier

The Japanese and American TNCs perceived the formation of the EC as a new round of attempts to set up a trade barrier around Europe. They responded by setting up subsidiaries or making use of mergers and acquisitions to by-pass a probable future trade barrier. The inflow of Japanese capital into the motor manufacturing industry in Britain in the 1980s was one of these responses.

The inflows of Japanese capital also brought along Japanese production methods and management strategies as well as industrial relations

which marked the beginning of the 'Japanisation' of the labour process and industrial relations in Britain. The Japanese management demanded that the unions should accept the 'single union deal' and the 'non-strike deal' as the preliminary conditions for the investment of capital as well as the recognition of unions. We can see how the formation of the EU, which should provide more universal and standardised protection to workers in theory, marginalises workers and the union movement in reality.

Sadler (1992) articulates the interaction between local changes and state policies within the context of regional and international changes, by focusing on the restructuring and relocation of steel and motor vehicle production in the northeast of England in the 1980s.

Decline in once staple industries such as coal and steel meshed with an intensification of the labour process in what remained of those sectors and the emergence of a low-waged small-firm centred economic base which rested upon the collapse of the traditional economy to provide insecurity. It is in this very real sense, that the Japanese wave of manufacturing investment depended upon and took its shape from conditions created... by the UK state's chosen path of mediation of international market forces.

(Sadler 1992: 254-5)

Sadler sees the threat of the relocation of production as the ultimate sanction, which enables multi-national corporations to enforce workplace flexibility through comparisons of performance.

Sadler argues that the state's policies, including the British government's and the EC's policies on coal and iron and steel, were crucial. The role of subsidies in the EC for both industries was and remains a cause of

friction between the member states. By the early 1990s, however, the EC's stance has changed to deregulating the internal market and combating 'undue' competition from outside by, for example, balancing Japanese car imports against UK assembled 'Japanese' cars. Sadler traces the changing role of the EC and points to the conflicts within the EC engendered by the interests of global corporate strategies.

Hong Kong and China

According to the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law, Hong Kong will continue its capitalist system after 1997 for fifty years under the framework of 'One Country Two Systems'. Maintaining the stability and prosperity of Hong Kong is top of the agenda for the Chinese government. Faced with the threat of the retreat of capital before and after 1997, the main strategy of Chinese officials is to maintain the confidence of the capitalists in Hong Kong. Not only have verbal assurances been given by the top leaders of China to the capitalists time and again, but the allocation of political power in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government also favours capital.

Capitalists continue to complain about Hong Kong's increasing social welfare budget and mounting labour legislation. Their reason is that these would destroy the corner stones of the success of Hong Kong: minimal government intervention and low tax rates. Any increasing expenditure on social welfare and new labour legislation, to them, was a conspiracy of the

British to destroy the financial tradition of Hong Kong, leaving the mess for the HKSAR government to handle (Wong 1997).

Some Chinese officials seem to accept the arguments of the capitalists and publicly assert that the rapid increase in the social welfare budget will bring disaster to Hong Kong. In the various advisory bodies on Hong Kong affairs within the Chinese government, most of the appointed representatives are from commercial and business backgrounds. Only a few of them possess a grassroots or labour background. Thus, the attitude of Chinese officials reinforces the imbalance of power between capital and labour in Hong Kong. The Chinese state acts exactly as a super-state to protect the rights of capitalists and to entice them to continue their investment in Hong Kong and Mainland China.

The continuation of the imported labour scheme in the early 1990s, and the cancellation of collective bargaining rights legislation by the Provisional Legislative Council in 1997, are evident examples of the increasing authority of capital over labour policies and legislation in Hong Kong. The widening imbalance of bargaining power between capital and labour is one of the main reasons behind the continuous marginalisation of workers in Hong Kong.

Both cases of the formation of a regional political economy – Britain in the EU, Hong Kong in China – illustrate the existence of a political structure which controls the social and political environment of capital

accumulation and induces the marginalisation of workers in the region concerned.

The marginalisation of workers in Britain and Hong Kong is a direct impact of the policies of the state and super-state on workers, so we should understand the marginalisation crisis of workers against this background. The marginalisation process is basically a product of class formation, which is conditioned by the economic, political, immigration and other related policies of the state. I will discuss in more detail how the policies of the British and Hong Kong governments facilitated the 'sedimentary class formation' in Britain and the 'disrupted class formation' in Hong Kong in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 respectively.

The Enterprise Level

Since the 1970s, three different but related debates about changes at the enterprise level have been initiated to explain the contemporary changes of capitalism: the labour process, the production system and the labour market. All these debates explain how the restructuring of capital has induced different kinds of marginalisation of workers.

The Changing Labour Process

Braverman (1974) suggests that the dominant imperative of capital is towards the application of technology and systems of work organisation designed to reduce the scope for discretion and the exercise of judgement by

labour, concentrating the function of conception within management. According to this theory, deskilling, reducing both skilled manual and clerical workers to a homogenous working class, is a major cause of proletarianisation. Moreover, the deskilling of labour also leads to their degrading.

In opposition to the theories of the labour process, the thesis of 'postindustrial society', 'flexible specialisation' and 're-professionalisation' posits a general upgrading of skills (Bell 1974; Kern and Schumann 1987; Piore and Sable 1984).

Elger (1979) criticises the simple proletarianisation thesis of Braverman. He argues that the deepening subordination and mechanisation have not created a simple homogeneous mass of deskilled labour, but 'a complex, internally differentiated apparatus of collective labour which contained an uneven variety of narrow skills and specific dexterities' (1979: 82).

Burawoy (1979) argues that management can 'manufacture consent' and that participation in the workplace, labour markets and structures can 'allow the degradation of work to pursue its course without continuing crises' (Burawoy 1979: 94). Thompson (1989) suggests that even when a more limited connection between deskilling and degradation is acknowledged, the consequences for working class action are unclear. The deskilling process can encourage 'horizontal' forms of conflict directed more at other workers than management (Burawoy 1979).

Owing to the critiques of Braverman's original thesis, the labour process debate has become less tied to the a priori notion of deskilling, but has become more associated with the analysis of multi-dimensional management strategies and equally complex responses by labour (Rubery 1978). The struggle between labour and capital for gaining or losing control in the labour process is the central issue of industrial relations (Hyman 1975). It is the power of control, or domination in the production process, rather than the skill level of labour or technological know-how of the enterprise that determines the relationship between capital and labour. It has been stated earlier that the migration of capital at a global level and the defeat of the organised labour movement by the state in the regional political economies, are structural factors which enhance the authority of capital which is then enforced and realised in the labour process.

Various empirical researches about different industries in different countries review the increasing authority of the employer in the labour process.¹² The current marginalisation of workers should be understood in the context of the continuously increasing and unchallenged authority of capital in the labour process to increase its control over labour.

The labour process debate was also influenced by the post-Fordist analysis, which suggests that the assumption of a linear tendency towards deskilling is erroneously predicated on the notion of a continued expansion of

¹² For example, see Webb (1996) about the use of TQM in manufacturing industries in the UK, Sosteric (1996) on a nightclub in Canada, Lui (1994) on outworkers in Hong Kong and Lee (1995) on women manufacturing workers in *Shenzhen*.

mass production. In the post-Fordist era, the management's objectives are not to reduce uncertainty within a known production system but to increase their capacity to respond to new market and technological conditions.

Changes in markets and technologies not only displace but also create new skills, while competitive success may be related to gaining the active co-operation of labour rather than just reducing the scope of labour to intervene in the labour process. For example, different management strategies or 'vocabularies', like 'Quality Circles', 'Just-in-Time (JIT)' and 'Total Quality Control (TQC)', have been introduced to legitimise the authority of their control (Sewell and Wilkinson 1992; Webb 1996).

As we can see, the capitalists use both the carrot and the stick to increase their authority. They may manufacture 'consent' by introducing successive waves of 'human resource' management 'vocabularies' to dissolve resistance and sceptical responses from labour. And if the carrot does not work, capital will just employ their stick so that they just close their production facilities where 'consent' cannot be manufactured and move their production to the 'green-field' of the huge world labour market. In conclusion, the increasing authority of capital in the labour process, in determining where, when and how to produce what, is a fundamental cause of the marginalisation process of workers.

The Changing Production System

Some authors have focused on the microscopic changes in production systems at the enterprise level. They claim that there was a revival of systems of 'flexible specialisation' – based on small-batch craft production, carried out on small and medium size business units, co-ordinated by market like processes of exchange (Piore and Sable 1984; Sabel and Zeitlin 1997).

Flexible specialisation theorists talk about work organisation that 'utilises more than a narrow segment of workers' skills, mobilises commitment to quality work, encourages self-discipline and autonomous decisions, and permits decentralisation of responsibility for a continuous flow of production' (Streck 1987: 298).

However, the basic dichotomy between mass production and flexible specialisation is seen by many commentators as crude and ill-considered (Pollert 1991; Smith 1987; Wood 1988). Smith (1987) proposes that the changes ought to be referred to as 'Neo-Fordism' rather than 'flexible specialisation'. Neo-Fordism connotes a continuity with mass production with respect to aspects of skill and control, but more flexible and decentralised methods for the workforce and technology to match differentiated and turbulent markets. Thompson (1989) criticises flexible specialisation theory for neglecting the significance of process and batch variations and for repeating the myth of the dominance of the assembly line. Mass production is not necessarily inflexible and using dedicated equipment to produce in a standardised way.

The development of the garment industry in Hong Kong and Britain supports the fact that mass production can be achieved through 'flexible specialisation' by utilising marginal workers and the sub-contracting networks of small workshops. Flexible specialisation can be achieved without any advanced manufacturing technology such as flexible manufacturing systems and manufacturing automation protocols, which was suggested by the flexible specialisation theorists as the key to flexible specialisation (Thompson 1989). Closely linked networks of small garment workshops can be found in Hong Kong, just like the backyard garment workshops in Birmingham. The specialisation of the production process among different firms and the specialisation of skills among different workers make up a highly efficient production system, which is co-ordinated through the subcontracting system to meet a mass but fluctuating demand.

Moreover, the key to the success of the above production networks is the extreme flexibility provided, externally and internally, by these networks of small workshops. The employers can quickly respond to unexpected demand by subcontracting work to other workshops, or by recruiting more homeworkers or outworkers.

We understand that it is not the small batch craft production but the network of small and medium size firms which provides the major source of flexibility in the garment industry in Hong Kong and Birmingham. These flexible networks, however, create more marginal jobs for homeworkers and the self-employed.

The Changing Labour Market

The third debate is about changes in the labour market in the advanced capitalist countries. Piore (1970) argues that the perpetuation of poverty can be best understood in terms of a dual-labour market. Piore suggests that the labour market can be divided into a dual model of primary and secondary markets. The primary market has the following traits: high wages, good working conditions, employment stability and job security, equity and due process in the administration of work rules, and chances of advancement. The secondary market has jobs that tend to have low wages, poor working conditions, considerable variability in employment, harsh and often arbitrary discipline, and little opportunity for advancement.

In his later work with Doeringer, Piore suggests ethnic stigmatisation as one of the institutional factors in the construction of the dual labour market (Doeringer and Piore 1971). Some academics suggest that the gender division of labour is a crucial factor in the assignment of women to the secondary sector (Barron and Norris 1976; Craig et al. 1982; Craig et al. 1985). Other institutional factors have also been suggested, for example Friedman (1978) and Rubery (1978) on the roles of workers' organisations; Wilkinson (1981) on firms' employment policies, as a means of understanding the segmentation of the labour market.

Atkinson (1985) describes differences in the labour market in his model of a 'flexible firm'. He makes a distinction between functionally and numerically flexible workers. Functionally flexible workers, according to

Atkinson, are those workers who are able to change their skills and tasks in relation to changing market condition at the core. Whereas different types of numerically flexible workers, by subcontracting, out-sourcing, self-employment and agency temporaries are at the periphery, whose numbers can be adjusted as market conditions fluctuate.

Bosch et al. (1993) identify different forms of flexibility – in working time, wage rates and other contractual terms. In the primary labour market, flexibility is achieved through multi-skilling, working-time flexibility and higher wage rates for overtime and unsocial hours. In the secondary segments of the labour market, flexibility is attained differently through part-time and temporary work, low pay and high insecurity. This distinction thus resolves arguments over whether workers in core or periphery jobs contribute most to overall flexibility (Hakim 1995a).

Nevertheless, flexible management is not really a new invention. Japan and the NICs are continually using flexible management in their export-oriented industrialisation process. Numerous small manufacturing establishments, which perform subcontracting work for the larger companies, can be found in Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan. The extensive uses of outworkers, overtime, and subcontracting all signify the long existence of flexible firms.

In addition, some authors (Elger 1990; Pollert 1991) argue that the impact of flexible management strategies in Britain might have been exaggerated. They claim that a variety of skills is necessary to exploit

arrangements such as JIT and modular production, and that variations or new responsibilities such as self-maintenance may be small. They think that it is more accurate to speak of multitasking, that is an enlarged number of interchangeable tasks carried out by substitutable labour.

It has already been mentioned that the major institutional cause of the current transformation of the labour process, production systems, as well as the labour market, is the increasing authority of capital over labour. I have argued that deskilling is just one of the many strategies that management uses to increase its control over labour. While management would like to manufacture 'consent', they would also like to manufacture 'fear and insecurity' among workers. Management is flexible in its use of the 'carrot' or 'stick' depending on the specific relations between workers and their management, as well as the power balance between collective labour and capital in the wider societal context with the active intervention of the state. This echoes Elger's and Fairbrother's (1992) argument that the changes in the labour market and production process 'have been quite varied, reflecting in part the local peculiarities of production and the specific relations between workers and their management' (1992: 90).

Flexible management is not a 'new' invention of management, rather it is as old as capitalism itself. Especially when we examine developments from a comparative perspective, we discover that in Hong Kong, along with the other NICs, subcontracting between large and small firms and the use of flexible management (use of over-time, out-worker, seasonal workers) existed

in its industrialisation period in the 1960s and has survived up to now. The 'Japanisation' or 'flexible' issues in western capitalist countries can thus be seen as a strategy of management to regain the power of control by persuading workers that learning from Japan and the NICs is necessary in order to compete with them.

'Divide and rule' is another old trick used by management. When they are still building their power, they may divide and segregate the labour market, both internally and externally. While management does not hesitate to use their big stick on marginal workers, they still need to use the carrot to retain co-operation among mainstream workers. However, when management gains enough authority and feels safe enough to use it, they will not just use their stick on 'peripheral' workers. We are now witnessing marginalisation being extended to the so-called 'core' workers. For example, at universities in both the UK and Hong Kong, it is not only cleaners who are working mainly as part-time staff under subcontracting agencies. Most newly employed lecturers are also under contract terms and more part-time staff are hired to do the teaching.

In short, the current marginalisation of workers and the labour movement is the direct result of the increasing authority and control of management in the labour process, the production system and the labour market.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed the migration of capital at a global level; the policies of the super-state and state at a regional political economy level; and the changes in the labour process, production system, and labour market at an enterprise level. All of the above factors are the structural causes of the contemporary marginalisation of labour.

Nevertheless, the structure of the labour market is not just a product of the production relations between worker and management, that is class relations. The construction of the labour market is indeed conditioned in the wider social context of gender and ethnic relations. In the next chapter, I will extend my discussion to investigate how class interacts with gender and ethnicity to divide and marginalise workers.

Chapter 4

Class is Still Central: A Rethinking of Social Stratification Theory

In the last chapter I reviewed the structural causes of the marginalisation of workers. In this chapter I will first synthesise recent developments in the theory and study of class, gender and ethnicity in order to conceptualise the marginalisation of workers as the combined social stratification effect of gender and ethnicity on class. I will maintain that although under severe attack, class or class analysis is not dead as suggested by many theorists of different traditions. Class analysis is still essential. Furthermore, it is the key framework for enhancing our understanding of the rising marginalisation of workers in contemporary capitalist society. However, I suggest we should be liberated from the pedigree Marxist tradition so that while we retain class as our centre of analysis, we should take into account the effects of gender and ethnicity in order to construct a complete theory of social stratification.

In the second section of this chapter, I will introduce the micro-macro class analysis model developed by Wright (1996), which is the basic analytical framework of this thesis. However, I will first synthesise the debates in the earlier section in order to incorporate the interaction of gender and ethnicity

on class; and also to alleviate the structural deterministic tendency of Wright's model.

The Debates on the 'Death of Class'

Nisbet (1959) started the debate about the 'death of class' by claiming that social class alone does not explain differences in wealth, power, and social status in the contemporary United States and in many western societies. Class divisions, he suggested, are being replaced by multidimensional, fluid and continuous status inequalities.

Westergaard (1972) defends the centrality and existence of class. He agrees that egalitarian reforms have failed to eliminate inequalities in income and property. Furthermore, he also sees the persistence of relative inequalities of opportunity between broadly defined classes and the continuing clustering of power among the elite. All of the above inequalities signify that class is still alive as an essential social category.

Other authors provide a different answer to the critique that the traditional criteria for class assignment are outdated. They maintain that there has been the formation of a 'new class' which has replaced the old one. In characterising the distinctiveness of the 'new class', Bell (1974) emphasises the control of scientific knowledge; Gouldner (1979) suggests the control of culture; Goldthorpe (1982) identifies delegated authority and the exercise of autonomy and discretion; while Wright (1985) highlights the control of skill and organisational assets.

Esping-Andersen (1993) believes that the new class in post-industrial society is the female service proletariat. He argues that both Marxist and Weberian class theories identify classes with reference to the axis of ownership, authority or the naked market nexus of industrial capitalism. Along these axes we are presented with a distribution of the male workforce. It follows that the class membership of women, whether employed or not, is largely defined as an adjunct to the male. A lion's share of post-industrial jobs is freed of any natural male bias with many jobs actually harbouring a female bias. Crompton (1991) restates that classes are still salient and class schemes are worth preserving, though they need adjusting, especially to accommodate women.

Pahl (1989) attacks the traditional class analysis by suggesting that its weakness lies in its assumption of a relationship between structure, consciousness and action. He finds this assumption problematic in studies of urban protest that seek to explain social dissent with reference to the structural-economic location of the disadvantaged. To the contrary, Marshall (1991) argues that class has been well theorised in terms of the contemporary occupational structure (Goldthorpe 1980), the model of the functions of capital and labour (Carchedi 1975), and the principal assets model (Wright 1985). Marshall also claims that 'class as a meaningful category of everyday culture and discourse is both understood by the vast majority of people in [Britain], and demonstrably shapes some important aspects of their lives' (1991: 116).

The Death of Historical Class?

Pakulski and Waters (1996) declare that most advanced societies are no longer class societies. They claim that the most important aspect is an attenuation of class identities, class ideologies and class organisations. They further allege that the communal aspects of class, class subcultures and milieux have disappeared.

Pakulski and Waters argue that class societies are specific historical entities. Born with industrial capitalism, class societies changed their form under the impact of organised or corporate capitalism, and are disappearing in the face of post-industrialisation and postmodernisation. The early forms of class arose in parallel with the gradual decline of village communities and estates and the concomitant strengthening of nation-states.

The debate around whether class is dead, like the question itself, are to a large extent sentimental. Both the defenders and questioners of class are pre-occupied with 'fideism, agnosticism or atheism' (Pakulski and Waters 1996: 27). Nevertheless, I find that the debate between the two sides are actually conducted on different planes, so no real dialogue has taken place and no consensus can be expected in such heated debates.

When sceptics, like Pakulski and Waters, argue that the actual formation of 'industrial classes' and 'organised classes' is dead, they are concerned with the actual formation of classes *per sé*. The defenders, like Westergaard and Crompton, however, are arguing that classes are changing, but the essence of the class scheme: division and conflict in their structural

position, communal feeling and consciousness among its occupants, and actions to transform the structure, are still alive in different forms. Could both sides be right? I propose that while the specific, empirical and historical class may have been transformed, the abstract, theoretical and analytical class is still alive. In the next section, I will introduce the theoretical debates on class and gender by the neo-Marxist school.

Interconnection of Class and Gender: The Neo-Marxist views

In this section, I will introduce Wright's class scheme of exploitation and his idea about the interconnection between class relations and gender relations. In conceptualising and defining class, the neo-Marxist school tries to distinguish exploitation from domination to construct a class scheme for modern capitalist society (Roemer 1982; Wright 1985; Wright 1989).

Exploitation vs. Domination

Wright (1989) stresses that there are two kinds of class analysis: exploitation-based and domination-based. When distinguishing the difference between exploitation and domination, Wright emphasises that exploitation intrinsically implies a set of opposing material interests. He argues that the domination-centred concepts of class tend to slide into the 'multiple oppression' approach which claims that societies are characterised by a plurality of oppressions each rooted in a different form of domination. None of such oppressions has any explanatory priority over any other. Class

becomes just one of the many forms of oppression, claiming no centrality for social and historical analysis. However, Wright contends that as Marxists traditionally believed, 'only by giving class this central place is it possible to develop a scientific theory of the trajectory of historical development, and in particular, a theory of the real historical alternatives to capitalism' (1989: 6).

Wright himself takes a more moderate stance on this argument in a footnote (Wright 1989: 6). He defends himself by stating that he only intends to claim that if one wants to retain the traditional Marxist commitment to class analysis, then a shift to a domination-centred concept of class will pose problems. I do think that a domination-centred concept of class only poses problems for 'traditional' Marxists. Wright feels uneasy about his previous works (Wright 1978, 1979) which tend to incline towards 'domination' rather than 'exploitation'. He thinks that the concept of domination is not 'scientific' because domination is not based on a materialistic foundation like exploitation, which is based on antagonistic interests. Wright, however, uses enormous efforts to redefine exploitation from a materialistic interest and incorporates credential and organisational assets as exploitation rather than domination (Wright 1985).

Why is it more scientific to base a class scheme on interest rather than power? Is interest only materialistically based or can it be ideologically based? Wright has not given a satisfactory answer to these questions, but only insists on pursuing a pedigree Marxist tradition. I would like to suggest that while we may have a multiple oppression approach, we can still consider the effect

of class on other kinds of oppressions, and their combined and separated effects in a specific time and place. In short, class is an extremely important independent variable in the process of social stratification, but not the one and only independent variable as suggested by Wright.

The Interconnection between Gender and Class

In his more recent work *Class Counts*, Wright (1996) takes a more open (or softened) stance in his explanation of the power of class and he would like to see a happy marriage of Marxism with Feminism. Wright admits that the view that class is 'more important' than gender is simply a by-product of a specific set of theoretical preoccupations.

Wright claims that this kind of functionalist reasoning in historical materialism has played an important role in the Marxist analysis of gender relations (Engels 1968 [1884]).

Wright, however, admits that no Marxists now defend a strong functionalist version of the base/superstructure image of society. Class has a presumptive importance for a broad range of social problems, but is not invariably viewed as the most important determinant. The central task of class analysis is to sort out the specific causal interactions between class and gender. *Class may indeed turn out to be 'more important' than gender for certain problems; but equally, gender may be more important than class for others.*

In conceptualising the interconnection between class and gender, Wright suggests that there are five forms. The first form is 'gender as a form

of class relations'. Gender relations are a form of class relations, or class relations are themselves directly organised through gender relations (Engels 1968 [1884]; Lerner, 1986).

The second form is 'gender relations and class relations reciprocally affecting each other'. Certain kinds of class positions may exist only by virtue of the fact that specific forms of gender relations are present. Domestic service is the classical example: gender relations play a crucial role in making possible maid and childcare services (Glenn 1992). Wright argues that the structure of gender relations helps to explain why jobs with particular characteristics are available. For example, the family wage, after its institutionalisation, becomes a powerful material force for keeping women at home and reinforcing gender differences in pay (Barrett 1984; Brenner and Ramas 1984).

The third form of the interconnection between gender and class relations is that of 'gender as a sorting mechanism into class locations'. The way that gender sorts people into class locations is probably the most obvious aspect of the interconnection between class and gender. Two kinds of factors linked to gender relations are given in explanation of gender differences in occupational and class distributions. The first one is gendered socialisation processes, which shape the occupational aspirations and skills of men and women, and thus affect the kinds of jobs they are likely to get. The second one is the various forms of inequality, domination and discrimination which either directly affect the access of men and women to various kinds of jobs, or indirectly affect access by controlling their acquisition of relevant resources.

'Gender as a mediated linkage to class location' is the fourth form of the interconnection between class and gender relations. Wright claims that individuals are linked to class structures through a variety of relations other than their direct location in the social relations of production. Gender relations constitute one of the pivotal ways in which such 'mediated linkages' to class are organised, especially through marriage. Class and gender are interconnected via the way that gender relations within families and kinship networks link people to various locations within the class structure.

The fifth form is 'gender as a causal interaction with class in determining outcomes'. Gender and class are interconnected not merely through the various ways they affect each other, but also through their mutual effects on a wide range of social phenomena. Of particular interest are those situations in which class and gender have interaction effects. Class and gender are intertwined rather than operating simply as independent mechanisms.

Wright claims that the above list is not meant to be exhaustive, and it certainly does not constitute a theory of class and gender. Rather, it is an agenda of issues that need to be considered with empirical research and theory construction. I would suggest that the above view of Wright is a remarkable but respectable retreat from his original orthodox Marxist stand.

His synthesis of the above five forms of the interconnections between gender and class provide a clear and analytical scheme for my discussion on the interplay between class, gender and ethnicity. Following Wright's

synthesis, I will examine the interplay of gender and ethnicity with class in the last three forms suggested by Wright. It follows that gender and ethnicity are firstly sorting mechanisms into class locations; secondly mediated linkages to class locations; and finally operate as causal interactions with class in determining class. In short, the gender and ethnicity inequalities are mainly *articulated through* and *intensified by* class inequalities. Westergaard (1995) also supports this centrality of class, in its interaction with gender and ethnicity. I will now introduce the Marxist view of Westergaard, who argues that gender and ethnicity inequalities mainly stem from the class dimension.

Class is Central: A Marxist View

Westergaard (1995) argues that although 'gender' and 'ethnicity' create inequalities, they function mainly through the 'class' dimension. Westergaard agrees that gender is a dimension of inequality distinct from class, but its effects are to compound class divisions rather than to neutralise them. He does not agree with the contention that intra-class differences, in domestic 'strategies' and personal opportunities, vary both by choice and by stage of life. He supports his contention by saying that the female partners of unskilled and especially unemployed men are rather less likely than other married women to have regular paid work. The reasons for this are more to do with lack of opportunity and with the power of social security rules – both class skewed influences – than with domestic strategies and personal choices.

To Westergaard (1995), class, gender and ethnicity are distinct dimensions of inequality. He states that unreconstructed Marxist interpretations are unconvincing when they seek to derive the subordination of women to men, or the oppression of blacks and browns by whites, primarily from the workings of capitalist economies. Westergaard argues that 'if the three broad dimensions are better depicted as *distinct* than as one package with class at its centre, they are also *different* in their modes of social operation, each *vis-à-vis* each other' (1995: 144) (original stress).

Women, according to Westergaard (1995), commonly cohabit with men in households and join the everyday lives of underdogs and 'overdogs' generally across the gender division. Gender inequality operates domestically, privately, within households, as well as in the public sphere. However, Westergaard contends that in the public sphere, gender and ethnic inequality operate in large measure through class inequality. In the public sphere women experience their social subordination especially, though not only, by way of their poor placement in the structure of class. All in all their economic 'life chances', that is, their chances of full access to paid work; of advancement and high reward in work; and of achieving influence and authority, command and power, are more limited.

According to Westergaard's views, the reverse relationship is virtually inconceivable. Gender inequality pushes women into the routine-grade slots of the class structure of work; but class inequality cannot turn male routine workers into women. Skin-colour discrimination pushes blacks and browns

downwards in the hierarchies of employment, housing, access to credit and so on; but class inequality does not usually mean that whites in the same levels of those hierarchies are designated 'coloured'. He argues that the asymmetry here is self-evident. Its implications seem to be overlooked in current conventional references to 'gender, race and class', as if these were essentially parallel (as well as distinct) dimensions of inequality. Furthermore, the asymmetry seems also to have been underplayed in the ferocious, more specialist debate about 'women and class' (Roberts, 1993; Crompton and Mann 1986).

Westergaard (1995) stresses that the implication is neither that class inequality 'explains' gender or ethnic inequality, nor that the latter two would vanish *ipso facto* if the former were to be abolished. The subordination of women to men, or of blacks to whites, in no way operates only in and through the economic order of class. Nevertheless a hypothetical near-classless society would give both gender and ethnic inequality less room to play.

I agree with Westergaard's idea that most gender and ethnic inequalities in contemporary society are articulated through and intensified by class inequality. However, as I mentioned when commenting on Wright's stance, gender and ethnic relations do not just function through exploitation but also operate as a means of domination to subordinate women and blacks. It is now worthwhile considering the Weberian view on 'status', which

extends our understanding from the economic to the cultural and social aspects of domination.

Gender and Ethnicity as Status: The Neo-Weberian View

Crompton (1993) criticises both the neo-Marxist and the neo-Weberian approach for intentionally excluding status from their analysis of class. She argues that recent debates have been hampered by an excessive focus on 'class' to the exclusion of other sources of structured social inequality. Crompton argues that though 'economic "class" factors (such as the nature of market demand, the extent and nature of control and authority relationships) are analytically separable from "prestige" factors in the structuring of employment... in practice, it is exceptionally difficult to draw a clear distinction between "class" and "status" at the level of jobs and employment' (1993: 127).

Status, according to Crompton, is a multi-dimensional concept with entitlements being one of the dimensions. The most frequently used concept of entitlements is derived from T.H. Marshall's concept of *citizenship*.

Marshall (1950) has described the development of social citizenship, that is, the right of all 'citizens' to services provided by the welfare state. Marshall (1950) distinguishes three kinds of citizenship: civil, political and social. The universalistic ideologies of liberal democracy made it possible for

those excluded from citizenship to argue that the barriers to their status as citizens should be removed.

To Crompton, many of the citizenship gains of the population at large are the outcome of class conflict. Subordinated classes have successfully gained the status of citizenship through these struggles. However, citizenship gains were largely achieved on behalf of a white, male working class. The rights of social citizenship, in particular, were modelled on patriarchal family structures. Excluded groups like women and blacks also fight for their citizenship through their own movements, separate from the class movement. Crompton suggests that the struggles to gain the status of citizenship by women and blacks are crucial in understanding their contemporary situation.

Many of the contemporary political debates over 'citizenship' are concerned with negative liberties rather than positive liberties, with personal freedoms rather than redistributive issues, which Marshall correctly saw as the major implication of social citizenship. However, not all citizens *de jure* or *de facto* enjoy the same entitlements. Some of the citizens are excluded from the entitlements due to the policies imposed by the state. The division and exclusion of citizens is a main theme of discussion in the 'underclass' debate.

The Underclass Debate

Rex suggests that black immigrants in Britain are at a disadvantage because they have been excluded from the British working class and thus

from the 'welfare-state deal' struggled for by the British working class (Rex and Tomlinson 1979; Rex 1986). Rex contemplates that the disadvantaged position of the black communities stems from the blacks' lack of access to social citizenship, despite their formal possession of civil and political rights. Therefore, the minorities of immigrant origin may be described as an 'underclass' 'who do not share in this welfare deal, but who, instead of forming an inert or despairing social residue, organize and act in their own "underclass" interest often relating themselves to colonial class positions' (Rex and Tomlinson 1979: 328).

Murray (1984) argues from a conservative position that the changes in the benefit systems in the USA have made unmarried parenthood, without employment, a more attractive option for both parents. He also contends that the decline in the rates of arrest has increased the possibility of getting away with criminal activity and its concomitant economic attractions. Welfare reforms have taken away the incentive to work. The black 'underclass' is demoralised while the capacity for self-help in the community has been cumulatively undermined by the policies of well-meaning white liberals. The poor develop a moral stance, which effectively removes the will to strive and further deepens the cycle of poverty.

Wilson (1987) concedes that the high unemployment rate, the increase in female-headed families, and the dependency on welfare are signifiers of the reinforced physical and social isolation of black residents in the urban ghettos. Wilson further argues that the residents of highly concentrated poverty

neighbourhoods in the inner city lack contact or sustained interaction with individuals and institutions that represent mainstream society. In short, Wilson disputes Murray's 'culture of poverty' concept in defining and understanding the underclass by proposing that it is the 'social isolation' process, which separates the underclass from mainstream society.

Wacquant and Wilson (1989) extend their argument that the 'welfare ethos' has not mysteriously taken up residence in the ghetto, rather that joblessness and economic exclusion have triggered a process of 'hyperghettoisation'. This process is the result of the mass exodus of jobs, black working class and middle class families and local institutions. Wacquant and Wilson assert that it is economic changes in the organisation of economically exerted pressure that have broken down the previous structure of the ghetto, which has lost much of its organisational strength. The ghetto has become increasingly marginalised economically with its activities no longer structured around an internal and relatively autonomous social space that duplicates the institutional structure of the larger society and provides basic minimal resources for social mobility.

The underclass have no control over, and are forced to rely on, services and institutions that are massively inferior to those of the wider society. The ghetto inhabitants comprise almost exclusively the most marginal and oppressed sections of the black community. The ghetto inhabitants have lost the economic underpinnings and the texture of organisation and patterned activities that allowed previous generations of

blacks to sustain family, community and collectivity even in the face of continued economic hardship and unflinching racial subordination. They have experienced a radical class and racial exclusion.

Wacquant and Wilson forcefully assert, and I agree with them, that the division between the underclass and the mainstream is a 'cumulative structural entrapment and forcible socioeconomic marginalisation resulting from the historically evolving interplay of class, racial, and gender domination, together with sea changes in the organization of American capitalism and failed urban and social policies' (1989: 25).

Wright's Micro and Macro Model of Class Analysis

In this section, I will introduce Wright's (1996) 'micro-macro' model of class analysis which provides the frame of reference for examining the class structure and class formation of marginal workers in Britain and Hong Kong in the remaining chapters.

In *Class Counts*, Wright (1996) constructs a model of class analysis at a micro and macro level. 'The core of the model is an attempt to link a micro-conception of the relationship between class location and class consciousness with a macro-level understanding of the relationship between class structure and class formation' (1996: 374). Class structure and location, class formation and consciousness, class practice and class struggles are conceptualised as the macro-micro pairs in the model. Furthermore, different 'modes of

determination': limitation, selection and transformation have been suggested in addressing the interaction between structure and practice.

Class Structure and Class Location

To Wright, the term 'class location' is 'a micro-level concept referring to the location of individuals within the structure of class relations', whereas the term 'class structure' is a 'concept referring to the overall organisation of class relations in some more macro-level of analysis, typically an entire society' (1996: 379). 'Class formation' refers to 'the formation of *collectively organised social forces within class structures in pursuit of class interests*' (1996: 379). He elaborates by saying that 'if class structures are defined by the *antagonistic* social relations *between* class locations, class formations are defined by *cooperative* social relations *within* class structures' (1996: 379) (original stress).

Class Formation and Class Consciousness

Class formation does not imply that the collectively organised social forces within a class structure have any inherent tendency to develop a revolutionary organisation based in 'fundamental' class interests. Wright proposes that there are 'strong' or 'weak' class formations; unitary or fragmented class formations; revolutionary, counterrevolutionary or reformist class formations.

Not only formal organisations, but also any form of collectively constituted social relations which enhance solidaristic action in pursuit of class interests are examples of class formation. Furthermore, the forging of solidaristic relations may be found both across the boundaries of the locations within a class structure and among collectively organised social forces within class structures. The concept of class formation is thus extended to include the formation of class alliances and the internal organisation of classes as such.

To Wright, 'class consciousness' refers to 'particular aspects of the subjectivity of individuals' (1996: 382). Wright emphasises the significance of looking at the consciousness of the individuals who make up the class. 'Consciousness will thus be used as a strictly micro-concept' (1996: 382). It contradicts Lukacs' (1971) view which defines 'class consciousness' as the collective thinking of the class as a collectivity. Wright further develops this concept by saying that, 'class consciousness can be understood as subjective processes with a class content that shape intentional choices with respect to those interests and struggles' (1996: 384).

Class Practices and Class Struggles

'Class practices' are defined by Wright as 'activities engaged in by members of a class using class capacities in order to realise at least some of their class interests' (1996: 381). Class practices are for the pursuit of class-based interests. 'Class struggles' are defined as 'organised form of antagonistic class practices, i.e. practices that are directed against each other' (1996:382). Atomised individuals are not the typical vehicles for class struggles. Rather,

class struggles originate from class formations. There is a transitional relationship between class practices and class struggles. ‘Class practices of individuals will have a strong tendency to develop into collective class struggles since the realisation of the interests of members of one class generally implies confrontation against the interests of members of other classes’ (1996: 382).

Micro-Macro Interaction

In Wright’s model, ‘the micro-level processes constitute what can be called the *micro-foundations* of the macro phenomena while macro-level processes *mediate* the micro-processes’ (1996: 402) (original stress). Therefore, this model is made up of two parts of a micro-macro linkage to establish an interactive model of class analysis. One has both to explore the micro foundations and to assess how the macro-phenomena mediate the micro-processes.

Limitation, Selection and Transformation

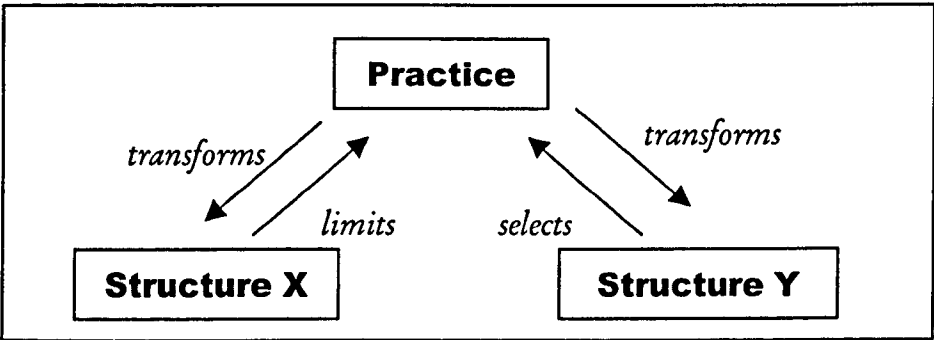


Figure 4.1: Forms of Determination: Limits, Selects and Transforms

Source: Wright (1996: 389).

Wright (1996) also suggests a general model between structures and practice with reference to transformation and limitation: 'structures impose limits on practices; practices transform the structures that so limit them' (1996: 387). Wright proposes that '*limits*, in this context, refer to the effects of the structure on the probabilities of all types of relevant practices occurring' (1996: 387) (original stress). In Wright's model, '*transformation* refers to the impact of practices on structure. Structures are objects of human intervention. People try either to change or to maintain them depending upon the effects of those structures on their interests' (1996: 387) (original stress). For Wright, 'selection should be understood as "limits within limits". Selection enters the analysis when we are concerned with the interaction of more than one kind of structure with practices... Selection refers to a narrowing of possibilities' (1996: 388). Figure 4.1 shows that structure X imposes limits on practices while structure Y selects practices within those limits.

With all the elements and relations constructed, Wright's model of class analysis can be summarised in Figure 4.2. At the micro individual level class locations impose limits on the consciousness of individuals and their class practices. Class consciousness, in turn, selects specific forms of practices. Class practices, then, transform both class consciousness and class location. At the macro level the class structure imposes limits on class formation and class struggle. Class formation also selects specific forms of class struggle, which can transform both class formation and class structure. Moreover, the micro-level process constitutes the macro-level phenomena, and the macro-level process mediates the micro-level phenomena.

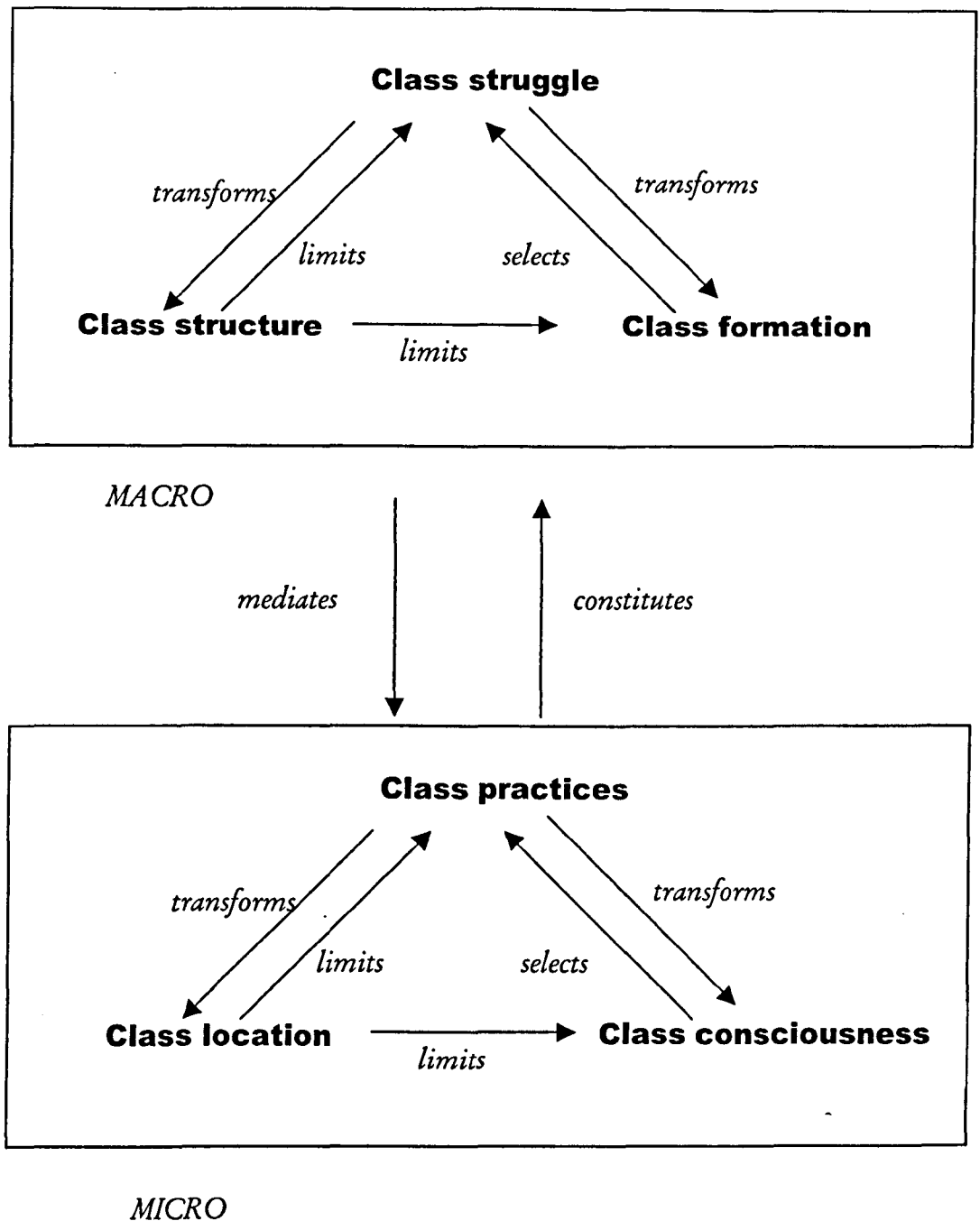


Figure 4.2: Macro-Micro Linkage in Class Analysis

Source: Wright (1996: 402).

To me, Wright's (1996) model is analytically clear and theoretically informed. More importantly, it has made at least three advancements on Marxist class analysis. Firstly, the new definition and conceptualisation of class formation can close the orthodox debate over 'false class consciousness' or 'unfinished revolutionary class formation' in explaining the regression of the 'revolutionary' working class. Secondly, his distinction between micro and macro levels of class analysis and his conception of class dialectics delineate the dialectical processes of class formation and class consciousness at the societal and individual levels. Thirdly, he manages to resolve the dichotomy between determinism and voluntarism through the identification of three processes: 'limit', 'transform', and 'select', which elaborate the dialectical relationship between structure and agent. In short, Wright's model provides the conceptual framework for understanding the interactive effect of different structures on the same agent.

Critiques of Wright's Model

Although Wright (1996) has provided a lucid, systematic and dialectical model of class analysis, the model has two major flaws. Firstly, Wright's model is highly abstract and without much elaboration of the exact interaction between the elements. Secondly, it inherits the 'deterministic' limitations of the structural approach.

As Wright himself points out in *Class Counts*, his micro-macro model has the following shortcomings. Firstly, his model still under-elaborates the range of variations among structure, consciousness and actions. Second, it

does not specify the actual magnitudes of the causal relations included in the model. Thirdly, his model is incomplete because he only incorporates class-related determinants in the model. He believes that a complete theory of class consciousness and class formation should include the nonclass forms of social division (race, ethnicity, gender) (1996: 405-406).

Other than Wright's own critiques, the main flaw of the above model is that this exploitation-centred class analysis approach still over-stresses the deterministic nature of structure and neglects the dynamic and active roles of agents in the shaping of class structure and the construction of class formation. Wright's model is undoubtedly a structural approach to class analysis, which I think has overlooked both the importance of the action of agents on the structure and also an understanding of the role of subjectivity in class formation.

However, there is a long tradition of class analysis of, in Wright's (1996) term, the processual approach, which views classes as constituted above all by the living experience of people.¹ Classes exist due to the fact that individuals share their life experience collectively and that the experience are shared under the frame of class.

By determining the subjective conditions of conflict, the identities and the meaning of the various actors engaged in conflict, the processual approach

¹ My quotation of E.P. Thompson's definition of class in Chapter 1 is a classical example of this processual approach to class.

is successful in putting the agent back in the focus of discussion which is a blind spot of the structural approach.

Moreover, processual approaches provide an analytical framework for understanding how the histories of class experiences that are found in different forms of class identity are generated by class biographies. Thus, the processual approach does uphold a historical dimension of a dynamic class formation which is definitely neglected by the static view of the structural approach as in Wright's macro-micro model.

Viewing the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches, I would like to integrate the structural approach with the processual approach to demonstrate the class formation in Britain and Hong Kong as interactions between agent and structure in a historical and dynamic way. Methodologically, I will use oral history data along with statistical data to analyse the historical formation of a marginal working class. To analyse the interactions between agent and structure, I will discuss the individuals' subjective consciousness and actions in addition to their objective class locations and structures. Oral history data definitely provide in-depth and rich information about the consciousness and action of marginal workers and their wider social context. Statistical data are supporting materials for discussing the objective structures. Furthermore, the other flaw of Wright's model is that it is highly abstract and without much elaboration of the exact interaction between the elements. Thus, I would like to enrich and supplement Wright's model through specifying the details and magnitude of

the 'limits' of class location on class consciousness, and through demonstrating how the class formation process mediates class consciousness.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have maintained that class analysis is still essential to enhance our understanding of the rising structural inequalities in contemporary capitalist society despite the fact that the traditional or historical image of the working class may have faded out. I suggest advancing from a pedigree Marxist tradition so that we can have a multiple oppression approach, with which we can still retain class as the centre of social relations, but at the same time take into account the effects of other kinds of oppression: gender and ethnicity.

Following Wright's classification, I consider that gender and ethnicity are firstly, sorting mechanisms into class locations; secondly, a mediated linkage to class locations; and thirdly, involved in a causal interaction with class in determining class. I also agree with Westergaard's idea that most gender and ethnic inequalities in contemporary society are articulated through and intensified by class inequality.

However, as Crompton suggests, gender and ethnic domination exists in economic as well as in cultural and social aspects. In the social arena, disapproval of certain citizenships of women and ethnic minorities by the state and the mainstream leads to the exclusion from and division within certain working classes.

Following Wacquant and Wilson's suggestion in the underclass debate, I understand the current marginalisation of workers as being a result of three structural changes: the changes resulting from economic restructuring, the changes in policies of the state, as well as the historically evolving interplay of class, racial, and gender domination.

Wright's (1996) model provides a lucid, systematic and dialectic model of class analysis, which I will use as the main analytical framework for this study. Firstly, I will adopt Wright's definition and conceptualisation of class formation to investigate the class formation process both in Britain and Hong Kong, which will be discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. Secondly, his distinction between micro and macro levels of class analysis provides an analytical tool for me to explain the differences between class struggles and practices in Britain and Hong Kong, which will be discussed in the concluding chapter. Thirdly, I will apply Wright's concepts of 'limit', 'transform', and 'select', to explain the effects of the interaction between class structure, consciousness and action of marginal workers.

Wright's class analysis model, however, is a structural approach, which neglects the historical and dynamic dimensions of class formation, which are stressed by the processual approach. I will integrate the processual approach and structural approach by using qualitative data as a supplement to the quantitative data in understanding the historical class formation of marginal workers in the two regions.

Chapter 5

Marginal Workers in Britain: A Sedimentary Class Formation

In this chapter, I will integrate both quantitative data and qualitative evidence to investigate the historical development of the class formation of marginal workers in Britain. The post-war expansion of capitalism in Britain created an increased demand for labour. Marginal workers constituted an indispensable part of that labour and the role played by marginal workers contributed to the expansion of capitalism by providing cheap labour.

The class formation of marginal workers in Britain is a 'sedimentary class formation'. By this expression I mean the formation process of the marginal class in Britain is a product of the continual incorporation of newcomers and the retention of old members of marginal workers. This operates like a geological phenomenon, 'sedimentation', where new sediments are deposited on top of old sediments to consolidate layers of sedimentary rock.

I will first present the secondary data analysis of the 1991 Census – Samples of Anonymised Records (SARs), which provides a sophisticated estimation of different kinds of marginal workers and gives a cross-sectional view of the size and distribution of different sub-groups of marginal workers

in the early 1990s. By tracing back the historical formation process of these different subgroups of marginal workers, I will then examine whether the development of these subgroups of marginal workers is linked in a historical sequence.

A Secondary Data Analysis of 1991 Census -- SARs

We have to solve several problems before we can accurately estimate the number and size of different categories of marginal workers. First, there is an enormous overlapping amongst different categories of marginal workers. For example, about half of the temporary workers are said to be part-time workers (Sly and Stillwell 1997), therefore, we need to know the size of the overlap among different categories beforehand in order to aggregate the total number of marginal workers. Secondly, the statistical definitions have changed from time to time. This implies that we should be extremely cautious in comparing figures of different periods. Thirdly, there are several sources of data like the Labour Force Survey (LFS), General Household Survey (GHS) or Census. As each of these sources has its own sampling, survey methods and even definition of terms, they may not corroborate one another about the number of a particular sub-category of marginal workers.

In order to solve the above problems, I am going to perform a secondary data analysis on a single source of data – the Samples of Anonymised Records (SARs) from the 1991 Census of Population – to have a cross-sectional review of the size and distribution of marginal workers in

Britain in 1991.¹ The first advantage of using the SARs from the 1991 Census of Population is that each respondent can be allocated by me to one *and only one* sub-category of mainstream, marginal or unclassified workers. Therefore, the problem of overlapping is eliminated. The second advantage is that the extensive coverage of the Census makes it more reliable than other sample surveys in estimating the size of the sub-categories of marginal workers, especially those from minority groups. Homeworkers, foreign workers and other minority groups, are always under-represented in sample surveys. Finally, the flexibility to create new variables by using SARs enables us to define marginal workers from different dimensions, for example, ownership of the means of production, authority and autonomy in the labour process, skill level or social status. This flexibility cannot be found in the published tables of the Census reports.

While the SARs of the Census provide a new research possibility, the use of SARs in my study of marginal workers has its own limitations. First, as the 1991 Census did not collect in-depth information about the labour market situation of the respondents, it has limitations in constructing detailed criteria (for example: the number of employees of self-employed respondents) to distinguish marginal workers from the mainstream. Second, since the Census is a cross-sectional analysis, it provides limited information on the past work history of the respondents. Therefore, many economically inactive persons,

¹ Samples of Anonymised Records (SARs) from the 1991 Census of Population is the first attempt at releasing Census data of Britain in a raw data format. The SAR data set includes the individual SAR (2 per cent samples of individuals) and the household SAR (1 per cent sample of households), which were provided by the Census Microdata Unit of the University of Manchester.

mainly the retired and housewives, may not be classified owing to their limited information.²

Different people may have different definitions about marginal workers. Any classification scheme is to a certain extent subjective. Therefore, my strategy is to perform a conservative estimate of marginal workers. I will only classify those undisputed categories as 'marginal' workers. For those persons whose classification is in doubt, I tend to classify them as 'mainstream' or 'unclassified'. For instance, I classify all full-time employees, except those homeworkers and foreign workers of the low Social Economic Group (SEG),³ as mainstream workers. However, many full-time employees of a low SEG status are actually working in similar conditions, such as the low-pay and minimal security of the marginal workers. However, with limited information in the SARs, I find it impossible to classify the full-time employees of the low SEG into mainstream or marginal. All in all, the

² For other pitfalls of SARs in the labour market data see Hakim (1995a).

³ I classified the Socio-Economic Group of the respondents as high or low according to the follow table:

SEGGROUP		SEG= High/low
1	Employers and managers in large establishments	High
3	Employers in small establishments	High
4	Managers in small establishments	High
5	Professional workers - self-employed	High
6	Professional workers - employees	High
7	Ancillary workers and artists	Low
8	Foremen and supervisors - non manual	High
9	Junior non-manual workers	Low
10	Personal service workers	Low
11	Foreman and workers - manual	High
12	Skilled manual workers	Low
13	Semi-skilled manual workers	Low
14	Unskilled manual workers	Low
15	Own account workers (other than professional)	Low
16	Farmers - employers and managers	High
17	Farmers - own account	Low
18	Agricultural workers	Low
19	Members of armed forces	Low
20	Inadequately described and not stated occupations	Low

conservative nature of this estimation gives us an idea about the lower limit of the size of marginal workers.

The whole population over 16 years of age are classified into mainstream, marginal or unclassified according to the following criteria:

1. All full-time workers are mainstream workers except those homeworkers and foreign workers who belong to the low socio-economic groups
2. All part-time workers are marginal except those belonging to the high socio-economic groups.
3. All self-employed with employee(s) are mainstream.⁴
4. All self-employed without employee(s) are marginal except those belonging to the high socio-economic groups.
5. All persons on Government Training Schemes are marginal except those belonging to the high socio-economic groups.
6. All unemployed are marginal except those belonging to high socio-economic groups.
7. Students in the low socio-economic groups are marginal but those in the high socio-economic groups are mainstream. Students, whose secondary economic positions is as a part-time worker or self-

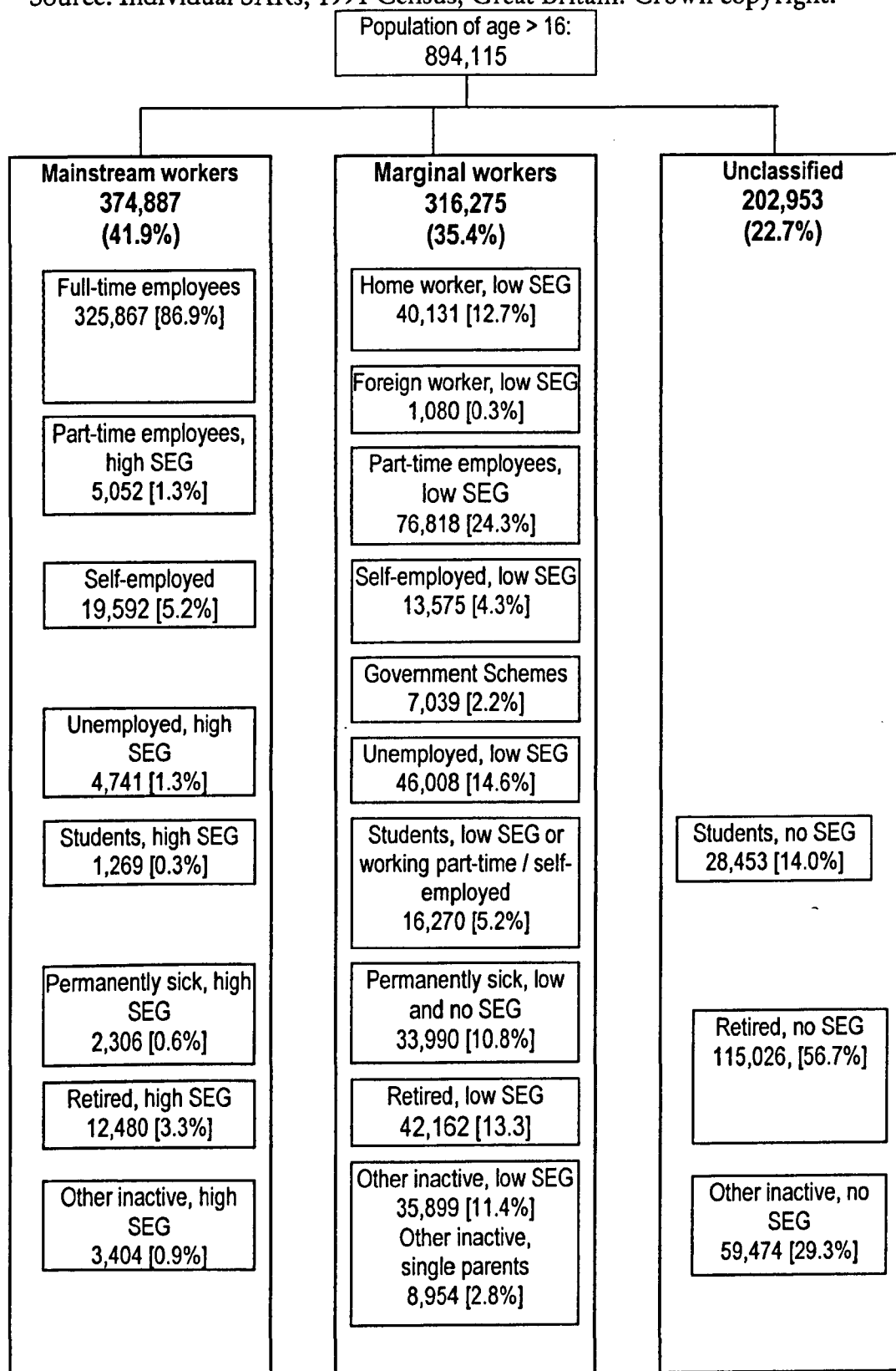
⁴ The 1991 Census did not include information about the number of employees of self-employed respondents. It follows that I cannot further divide a self-employed person into mainstream or marginal according to the number of employees. Therefore, I am adopting this strict definition.

employed, are classified as marginal. Those students without a socio-economic groupings are unclassified, that is, neither mainstream nor marginal.

8. All permanently sick are marginal except those belonging to the high socio-economic groups.
9. Retired people in the high socio-economic groups are mainstream and those in the low socio-economic groups are marginal. Those retired people without a socio-economic groups are unclassified.
10. Other inactive people (mainly housewives) in the high socio-economic groups are mainstream and those in the low socio-economic groups are marginal. Those inactive people not belonging to any socio-economic groups are unclassified except those single parents who are classified as marginal.

Figure 5.1: Classification of the Mainstream, Marginal or Unclassified of the 2 % Individual Samples of Anonymised Records from the 1991 Census of Population of Great Britain.

Source: Individual SARs, 1991 Census, Great Britain. Crown copyright.



The Size and Distribution of Marginal Workers

According to the above criteria, I have reached the following estimation. Out of 894,115 people of age 16 and over in the 2 per cent SARs, 41.9 per cent (374,887) were mainstream workers, 35.4 per cent (316,275) were marginal, and 22.7 per cent (202,953) unclassified.⁵ Comprising over a third, this confirms that marginal workers constitute an indispensable part of the total working population.⁶

Marginal Workers

I find that, with reference to the SARs, marginal workers were so heterogeneous that six major sub-groups constituted them. The major sub-groups were as follows: part-time employees of the low SEG (24.3 per cent of total marginal workers); the unemployed of the low SEG (14.6%); the retired of the low SEG (13.3%); homeworkers of the low SEG (12.7%); the inactive of the low SEG (11.4%), and the permanently sick of the low or without SEG (10.8%). The minority groups included students of the low SEG working part-time (5.2%), the self-employed of the low SEG (4.3%), single parents (2.8%) and people in government training schemes (2.2%).

⁵ The numbers of each category of mainstream and marginal workers in Great Britain can be calculated by multiplying the number of corresponding category in the 2% SAR by 50. For example, the number of marginal workers in Great Britain in 1991 was 15,813,750 (15.8 million), while the number of mainstream workers was 18,744,350 (18.7 million).

⁶ For the accuracy of estimates from the SARs, please refer to Census Microdata Unit, Faculty of Economic and Social Studies, University of Manchester (1993).

Part-time Workers

Most of the part-time employees were in the low SEG. Only one in fifteen of them was in the high SEG. There were 76,818 part-time employees in low SEG who constituted the largest group of marginal workers. About one in four marginal workers (24.3%) was a part-time employee of the low SEG.

Women were more likely than men, and white people were more likely than ethnic minorities to be engaged in part-time marginal work. Among the 76,818 part-time marginal workers, 92.0 per cent of them were women and 97.3 per cent of them were white. White women constituted the largest group (89.8%) of part-time marginal workers and about one in seven white women (15.5%) were part-time marginal workers. The percentages of Black Caribbean, Indian, and Pakistani women engaged in part-time marginal work were 11.5 per cent, 8.3 per cent and 3.3 per cent respectively.

The Unemployed

There were 32,246 unemployed people in the low SEG with another 13,482 unemployed people in no SEG. Together they constituted 14.6 per cent of marginal workers. Unemployed people were the second largest group of marginal workers. About one out of seven marginal workers was an unemployed person. There are more men than women and more ethnic minorities as a whole than white people in the group of unemployed marginal workers.

Among the 46,008 unemployed marginal workers, 31,682 (68.9%) were male; 28,642 (62.3%) were white male, which constituted the largest group of unemployed marginal workers. About one in fourteen (7.4%) white males belongs to this unemployed marginal workers group. The corresponding percentage for Black Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi and male were 18.9 per cent, 9.5 per cent, 20.3 per cent and 22.9 per cent, which signifies that ethnic minority males are more likely than white males to be unemployed. However, Indian males seem to have better employment prospects than other minority groups.

Retired People

Another major group of marginal workers was the retired people in the low SEG. There were 42,162 retired people in the low SEG, 12,480 retired people in the high SEG, and 59,474 retired people who did not belong to any SEG. I categorise them as marginal, mainstream, and unclassified respectively. Over one in eight (13.3%) marginal workers was a retired person, the third largest group of marginal workers. Most (98.5%) of the marginal retired people were white; half of these white marginal retired people were male and half female.

Homeworkers

There were all together 40,131 marginal homeworkers, comprising 12.7 per cent of marginal workers. Homeworkers were the fourth largest grouping of marginal workers. All homeworkers in the low SEG were marginal. Among them, the major sub-groups were part-time employees

(5,673), full-time employees (9,182) and self-employed homeworkers without employees (24,915). In short, about one in eight marginal workers was a homeworker, of whom six out of ten were self-employed.

Permanently Sick

19,229 permanently sick people did not belong to any SEG, together with 14,761 permanently sick people in the low SEG. Therefore, altogether there were 33,900 permanently sick people who were marginal, comprising 10.8 per cent of marginal workers.

Other Inactive People

Among other inactive people, 8,954 single parents were marginal. They comprised 2.8 per cent of marginal workers.

Another 35,899 inactive people in the low SEG, most of whom were housewives, were marginal, compared with 3,404 inactive people in the high SEG, who were mainstream. Thus, about one in eleven (11.4%) marginal workers was an inactive person in the low SEG. They made up the fifth largest group of marginal workers. Women were more likely than men to be single parents. Among the 8,954 inactive single parents, 96.8 per cent of them were female. Moreover, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and black women are more likely than other ethnic groups to be single parents; 5.7 per cent of Bangladeshi, 5.2 per cent of Pakistani, 4.9 per cent of black Caribbean and 4.4 per cent of Black African women belonged to this group, compared with 1.8 per cent of white and 1.7 per cent of Indian women.

Students

There were 12,178 students in the low SEG and 4,102 students who were working part-time or as self-employed workers. These two groups of students in total comprised 5.2 per cent of all marginal workers.

The Self-employed

Among the self-employed, 12,612 people were self-employed without employees and in the low SEG; another 963 people were self-employed with employees and in the low SEG. These two groups constituted 4.0 per cent and 0.3 per cent of marginal workers respectively. Together with the self-employed homeworkers in the low SEG (25,276), about 12.3 per cent of marginal workers were self-employed. In other word, about one in eight marginal workers was a self-employed person in the low SEG, and two-thirds of them were homeworkers. Asian males were more likely than other ethnic groups to be working as self-employed marginal workers. Only 1.9 per cent of white males belonged to this group, while the percentage for Indian and Pakistani males was much higher at 8.2 per cent and 7.9 per cent. For Bangladeshi males the percentage for the marginal self-employed was only 1.7 per cent. However, another 6.2 per cent of Bangladeshi males were mainstream self-employed, who employed employees and were in the high SEG. Many of these mainstream self-employed Bangladeshi males were small employers in a family business, whose economic position was similar to the marginal self-employed.

Mainstream Workers

Marginal workers are so heterogeneous that they consist of several sub-groups with a considerable size, whereas mainstream workers are homogeneously dominated by the sub-groups of full-time employees. Among the 374,887 mainstream workers, 326,867 of them (86.9%) were full-time employees, of whom 235,844 were in the low SEG, comprising 63 per cent of mainstream workers. There were 90,023 full-time employees in the high SEG, making up 24.1 per cent of mainstream workers. Among full-time employees, seven out of ten were in the low SEG while only three out of ten were in the high SEG. Some of the full-time employees in the low SEG, for example temporary workers might indeed belong to the marginal workers rather than the mainstream. Nevertheless, owing to the limited information included in the Census data and my conservative principle in estimating the size of marginal workers, I have to classify them as mainstream rather than marginal.

The second largest group of mainstream workers was the self-employed (including self-employed with employees and the self-employed in the high SEG). There were 19,592 self-employed people constituting 5.2 per cent of the mainstream population. The third largest group of mainstream workers was retired people in the high SEG. There were 12,480 of them (3.3% of the mainstream) in 1991.

There were 5,052 part-time employees in the high SEG and 4,741 unemployed people in the high SEG. Both of them constituted 1.3 per cent of mainstream workers. All other categories of mainstream workers: the

permanently sick in the high SEG, students in the high SEG and other inactive in the high SEG comprised less than 1 per cent of mainstream workers.

The Unclassified

202,953 people were unclassified. Most of them were economically inactive women, as seven out of ten (71.9%) of the unclassified were women. 56.7 per cent of the unclassified (115,026) were retired people who did not belong to any SEG, of whom 64.4 per cent were female and 35.6 per cent were male. Furthermore, 59,474 other inactive people who had no SEG (29.3%) were unclassified. Among them, 97 per cent were female. 24.4 per cent were in the 15-40 age group, 34.1 per cent were in the 41-60 age group and 41.6 per cent were aged 61 and over. It confirms that most of these inactive people were housewives outside the labour market. 28,453 students of no SEG (14.0%) were also unclassified.

Characteristics of Marginal Workers

Sex

Women were more likely to be marginal workers than men. Among women of age 16 and over, 40 per cent of them were marginal workers, 28.8 per cent were mainstream, and 31.3 per cent were unclassified. Roughly, about four in ten women of working age were marginal, three out of ten were mainstream, with the remaining three unclassified.

Table 5.1: Distribution of Categories of Workers by Sex, Great Britain, 1991 Census -- SARs

Sex	Mainstream		Marginal		Unclassified	
	Freq.	Row% Col.%	Freq.	Row% Col.%	Freq.	Row% Col.%
Male	240,595	56.3% 64.2%	129,640	30.3% 41.0%	57,028	13.3% 28.1%
Female	134,292	28.8% 35.8%	186,635	40.0% 59.0%	145,925	31.3% 71.9%
Total	374,887	41.9%	316,275	35.4%	202,953	22.7%
$\chi^2=77752$ d.f. = 2 $p < 0.01$				n = 894,115 missing = 0		

Source: Individual SARs, 1991 Census of Population, Great Britain.

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More males belonged to the mainstream group. 64.2 per cent of working age males were of the mainstream, 30.3 per cent marginal and 13.3 per cent unclassified. In short, more than six out of ten males were mainstream, three out of ten were marginal, with only one out of ten unclassified.

Among the 316,725 marginal workers, about six out of ten (59.0%) were female compared with only four out of ten (41.0%) male. There were 374,887 mainstream workers, of whom 64.2 per cent were male and 35.8 per cent were female. Since more women than men are involved in housework, a great majority of the unclassified group were female. 71.9 per cent of the unclassified were female, 28.1 per cent male. All the above figures confirm that the gender division of labour is a powerful sorting mechanism of the class positions of men and women. Women, under gender subordination, are more likely to be sorted into marginal jobs, especially part-time jobs.

Age

Old people aged over 60 were more likely to be marginal. Among the 61-70 age group, 44.4 per cent were marginal, with only 19.0 per cent mainstream and 36.6 per cent unclassified. For the 71 and over age group, 11 per cent were marginal, 2.7 per cent mainstream and 86.2 per cent unclassified. Those aged between 21-50 were more likely to be mainstream. Out of them, about eleven out of twenty were mainstream and seven out of twenty marginal. Among the 16-20 age group, the proportions of the three groups was almost the same: 35.6 per cent marginal, 34.4 per cent mainstream and 30.1 per cent unclassified.

Ethnicity

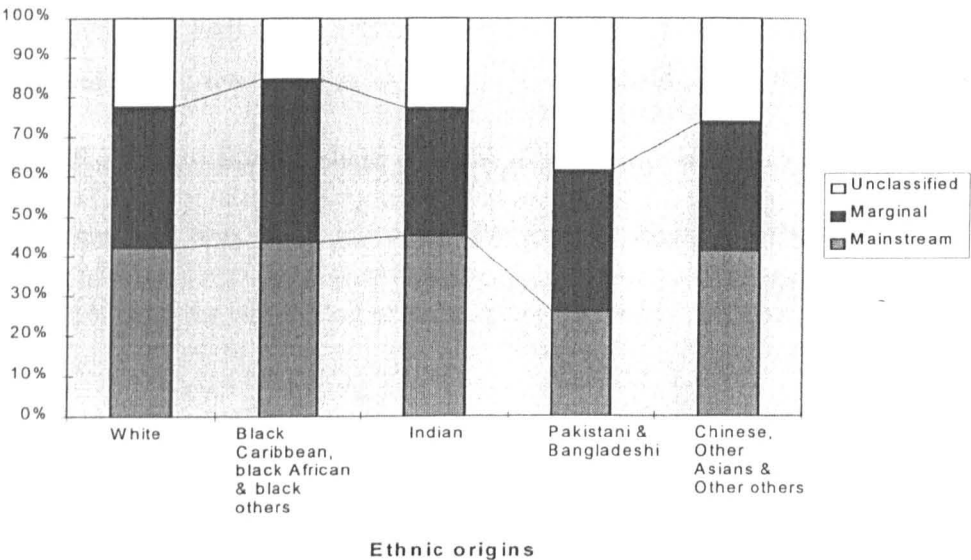


Figure 5.2: Percentage Distribution of the Mainstream, Marginal and Unclassified by Ethnic Origins, Great Britain, 1991 Census – SARs

Source: Individual SARs, 1991 Census of Population, Great Britain. Crown copyright.

People of ethnic minority origin were more likely to be marginal. Owing to the dominant proportion of white people among the working population, the distribution of marginal and mainstream among them was similar to that of the whole population (42% mainstream; 35.4% marginal and 22.6% unclassified).

The Irish were more likely to be marginal than other white people. For those who were born in the Irish Republic, 40.6 per cent of them were marginal and only 36.2 per cent were mainstream.

Black people were more likely to be marginal as about four out of ten were marginal workers, a proportion much higher than that of white people. The detailed breakdown is as follows: Black Caribbean (41.8%), Black Africans (38.6%) and Black others (42.1%). For black people, the proportion in the mainstream was 43.4 per cent, which was slightly greater than for white people. Among all ethnic groups, both minority and majority, black people were the lowest proportion (15.5%) in the unclassified category. The reason is that more retired black women were more economically active than their white counterparts, so that they can be classified.

Indian people have a better class position than white people and this is exceptional among minorities. The proportion of mainstream was 44.9 per cent, 2.9 per cent greater than that of the white population. At the same time, the

proportion of marginals was 32.4 per cent, 3 per cent less than that of the white population. This suggests that more mainstream and less marginal workers were found in the Indian ethnic group than all other ethnic groups. The better class position of Indian people can be explained by the success of their second or third generations in higher education as many of them are now working as professionals: doctors, lawyers, accountants and engineers.

Pakistani and Bangladeshi people were less likely to be in the mainstream. For Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, the proportion in the mainstream was 25.8 per cent, which was much lower than the proportion for white people. The proportion classified as marginal for these two ethnic groups, however, was similar to white people. This was due to the high inactivity rate of women of Pakistani/Bangladeshi origin. Among them, for instance, four out of ten people (38.3%) were unclassified. If we disregard counting these inactive women, Pakistani and Bangladeshi people are the most disadvantaged ethnic groups with the highest proportion of marginal workers.

The more disadvantaged class position of black people compared to white people demonstrates that the ethnic division of labour is a strong mechanism in allocating ethnic minorities into marginal class positions. However, Indian people are in better class positions than white people, which is exceptional among minority groups. Their more advantageous class position compared to Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, and even the white population, can be explained by two reasons. Firstly, higher education

qualifications of the second and third generations of Indian people enable them to have a higher upward class mobility than other ethnic groups. Secondly, among the Asian population in Britain, the 'sedimentary' class formation is 'disrupted' as in the case of Hong Kong. Newcomers from Pakistan and Bangladesh have filled the lowest class position in the manufacturing industry previously occupied by Indian people. Moreover, like Chinese males in Hong Kong, Indian males tend to open small businesses and often exploit Indian women who work as unpaid family workers and homeworkers.

Summary of the SARs Results

In this section, the secondary analysis of the 1991 Census — SARs depicts a cross-sectional picture about the size and distribution of marginal workers in Britain in the early 1990s. About a third of the total working population were some kind of marginal workers in 1991. It confirms that marginal workers constitute an indispensable part of the British working force.

From the SARs data, I also identify several sub-groups of marginal workers: white female part-time workers, white male unemployed, white retired, Asian male self-employed, and ethnic minority female single parents. The domination of certain gender-ethnic groups in certain sub-groups of marginal workers poses an important question: how and why are such gender-ethnic groups sorted into a particular marginal class position? What is the linkage between the use of these sub-groups in the process of capital

accumulation and the policies of the state? Moreover, the advantageous class position of men over women, of white people over ethnic minorities, and of Indians over other Asian groups also poses an important question: How does capital utilise gender and ethnic divisions among workers in creating different strata of marginal workers?

In order to tackle these questions, I will trace the historical formation of these sub-groups of marginal workers in three periods: from the mid-1940s to the early 1970s, the rise of Fordism; from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s, the decline of Fordism; and from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s, the rise of flexible accumulation.

The Sedimentary Class Formation

British capital continually exploits ethnic and gender domination in society by creating successive waves of marginal workers. Ethnic and gender divisions of labour thus become the two main sorting mechanisms of the class position of marginal workers.

The mass importation of Irish people to Britain which started as early as in the 1850s and continued until the 1950s together with the importation of black Commonwealth workers during the 1950s and the 1960s provided an abundant cheap labour supply for manufacturing and the building industry. Most of them were young male migrants. These migrant workers became the main impetus of the mass production system of the Fordist mode of production.

Utilising the subordinate role of women in the family, British capital offered part-time jobs to women to suit their conflicting roles as a 'caring' wife/mother and as a wage-earner. Based on the 'family wage' concept, the wage levels of female-dominated part-time work was lower than that of male-dominated full-time work. Since the 1960s, increasing number of white women workers have worked as part-time workers, first in manufacturing, then in the service, industries. Most of the part-time women workers were white married women. Thereafter, part-time female workers became a major category of female marginal workers.

Deindustrialisation and mass unemployment in the mid-1970s marked the decline in the Fordist mode of production. Ethnic minority male workers were the first to be made redundant and become unemployed. Different ethnic minorities had different survival tactics. Asian men tended to become self-employed or owners of small businesses like corner shops, takeaways and manufacturing workshops. In order to survive, Asian men exploited the labour power of their wives and children, who worked as unpaid family workers and homeworkers.

By tightening unemployment benefit, the British government intended to push the long-term unemployed Irish males into work. However, many of them could only find jobs in the shadow/underground economy. They had to work as casual workers in the construction and industrial cleaning industries in order to supplement their lower unemployment benefit. Black males, sharing a similar situation with the Irish, also worked in the

shadow economy. Moreover, many black men found themselves harassed by the law and order policies of the state, which pushed them more and more in the direction of petty crime. Therefore, they were driven to the margins of British society.

Unlike the Asian women who entered Britain as the dependants of male migrant workers, many Afro-Caribbean women entered Britain as single women, who were migrant workers themselves. Many of them worked in the health service and other service industries in the 1960s and 1970s. As the Caribbean women held a more secure class position than their male counterparts, they challenged male domination. Many of them were determined to live as single parents. In the 1990s, many black single parents found themselves trapped in the welfare system due to an inadequate low-cost childcare service. Many of them thus had to work as part-time and temporary workers. White single mothers shared the same situation.

During the 1960s and the early 1970s, the white male 'affluent' workers in manufacturing industry constituted the major group of mainstream workers. However, these British mainstream workers experienced a long-term degradation amidst the declining economic performance and hegemony of Britain in the post Second World War world capitalist order. Since the 1970s, mass unemployment and the deindustrialisation process have created a 'marginal trap'. More and more mainstream workers have fallen into the marginal class, but only a few of them were able to climb up again into the mainstream class. Many of these ex-

affluent workers were no longer affluent, so they had to work as temporary workers or as self-employed to earn enough to keep themselves even at subsistence level in the 1990s.

These groups of marginal workers are not mutually exclusive and discrete but are historically interconnected. Nevertheless, the utilisation of the latter groups of marginal workers does not mean an end of the utilisation of the former groups. Many old members are still trapped in their low-paid and insecure jobs. I would like to characterise such a historical process of class formation of marginal workers in Britain as a '*sedimentary class formation*'.⁷

The 1950s to 1970s: the Rise of the Fordist Mode of Production

The Fordist mode of production attempts to solve the under-consumption and over-production crisis of capitalism by increasing productivity in the labour process and increasing the consumption power of the skilled workers, which sustains a mass production and mass consumption system. One of the missing pieces of the above arguments is that it neglects the co-existence of a large amount of low wage and low-skilled marginal workers with the more privileged and skilled mainstream workers. The 'affluence' of mainstream workers is, however, dependent on the 'poverty' of marginal workers. Extensive uses of migrant workers from the 1950s to the 1970s, and women part-time workers since the 1960s, signified that the

⁷ Please refer to the explanation of '*sedimentary class formation*' in p.114 of this thesis.

existence of these marginal workers was a necessary condition for the expansion of mass production methods in the manufacturing industry.

The 1950s: Migrant Workers

Migrant workers were the main category of marginal workers in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s. Different waves of migrants, which were divided by an ethnic division of labour, were utilised by capital with the help of a periodical loosening and tightening of immigration control by the state. Irish workers composed the first group of migrants who arrived after the Second World War. Though having a long history of migration to the mainland, they mainly worked as casual workers in the manufacturing and construction industry. Caribbean and Asian male workers, who came during and after the decolonisation of the British Empire, provided an abundant supply of workers for the foundry, motor and machinery manufacturing industries in the 1960s. Not all of the migrant workers were male. Also, not all of them were employed in the private sector. Many Caribbean women who came to Britain were single women, who intended to work in Britain. The expanding public health services provided numerous job opportunities for these Caribbean women.

Being the earliest industrial country, Britain was the first to experience large-scale labour migration. By 1851, there were over 700,000 Irish in Britain, making up 3 per cent of the population of England and Wales and 7 per cent of the population of Scotland (Jackson 1963). The inflow of Irish people continued after the Second World War. Britain had a net inflow of

about 350,000 migrants from Ireland between 1946 and 1959. Irish migrant workers provided a source of manual labour for manufacturing industry and construction (Castles and Miller 1993:71).

The independence movements of the colonies marked the fall of the British Empire, which induced a notable trend of migration of 'black workers' from former colonies to Britain after the Second World War. These black workers provided a new source of manual labour for the growing manufacturing industries. The migration of workers from the New Commonwealth started principally after 1945 and grew during the 1950s. By 1951, there were 218,000 people of New Commonwealth origin,⁸ a figure which increased to 541,000 in 1961.

Table 5.2: Residents Born in the New Commonwealth by Year of Entry and Country of Birth, Great Britain, 1984

	(in thousands)					
	Year of Entry					
	Pre- 1955	1955-64	1965-74	1975-84	Not stated	Total
Caribbean	18	146	52	8	18	242
Indian	61	87	148	64	23	382
Pakistani	5	41	72	63	9	189
Bangladeshi	0	5	10	20	2	38
East African	6	16	113	49	9	192
Rest of Africa	7	9	22	30	7	75
Far East	10	23	44	38	3	118
Other New Commonwealth	41	52	49	16	7	163
Total New Commonwealth	147	379	509	288	77	1439

⁸ New Commonwealth included former colonies in the Caribbean, the Indian sub-continent and Africa. Statistics here also included Pakistan, which subsequently left the Commonwealth.

Source: Labour Force Survey, 1984.

Caribbean workers migrated to Britain earlier than Asians and East Africans. From Table 5.2, there were 242,000 Caribbean workers in Britain in 1984, of whom 146,000 (60%) emigrated to Britain in the period 1955 to 1964. Most of the Asian workers migrated to Britain from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh in the 1960s. Among the Asians, the Indians were the largest and earliest group to come with most of them (39%) entered Britain between 1965 and 1974. Pakistanis, the second largest group of Asians, entered Britain in almost the same period as Indian people. Bangladeshis constituted the smallest ethnic minority group of Asian origin with 38,000 in 1984. They entered Britain in a later period with the majority of them (53%) coming to Britain between 1975 and 1984. The time of entry of different groups of black workers also has significant effects on their position in the labour market. Generally speaking, newcomers like the Bangladeshis always occupy the bottom layer of the labour market.

Asian Male Migrant Workers

From the 1950s to the 1960s, hundreds of thousands of male workers migrated from the Indian sub-continent to Britain. Most of them were from rural backgrounds. They came to join their relatives who had settled down earlier in the North East, the West Midlands, and London. Those who were already of adult age and with a limited knowledge of English usually started as unskilled workers in British foundries or other factories (Duffield 1988).

The typical trajectory of the first generation Asian male workers is as follows. They started working as a factory worker in various factories, then went back to the sub-continent to get married. They usually needed a more stable income after marriage, so they came back and settled down in semi-skilled jobs in the manufacturing and transportation industry.

Marginal Man between Two Cultures

Those who were still in their adolescence when they came to Britain usually finished their secondary education in Britain. Owing to difficulties in communicating in English, they usually lagged behind the others academically. They might have found that they were trapped in a marginal position between the two cultures of Britain and their motherland. They might also have found that 'emigration' or 'reunion' disturbed their education. When Aneil (UK41, M/36,⁹ Pakistani) came to Britain from Pakistan in 1969 at the age of eleven, having learnt only the English alphabet, he found that it was difficult for him to get into the education system.

Aneil: 'When I started to go to school I used to go one morning just specifically for English, and one afternoon for PE and Maths. Our group came late to this country and was put into a specific separate group so as not to hold back other people.'

It is this early ethnic segregation in the school that generated their feeling of inferiority: 'Not good in English' and 'not to hold back other people'. After two years of learning English, he was then put back into the

⁹ The ages of the informants presented in the summary information were their ages at the time of interview, that is, in 1994 for British informants and in 1996 for Hong Kong informants.

rest of the class. He found that he was still in a disadvantaged position that, 'we were still behind. English improved, but all the rest of the work was behind'.

After Aneil had finished his CSEs, his father decided to go back to Pakistan to avoid racial tension in Britain. Again, Aneil found himself caught up in a marginal position where he belonged neither to Pakistan nor to Britain. He could not merge back into the life in Pakistan. He again considered language as the barrier.

Aneil: 'I got a place in a college in Pakistan, which was doing O levels. But when I got the place there, I found it very very difficult to mix, because of the language. After 18 months, I decided to come back by myself. I feel more at home in Britain than in Pakistan.'

Settling Down and Marriage

Most Asian migrant workers came for 'economic' reasons. They came to the UK with the intention of earning more money before going back to their home country. Many of the first generation of Asian migrants did go back, especially those who came here in their adulthood, like Aneil's father. However, most of the younger generation, especially those who arrived in the UK in their childhood or adolescence, like Aneil, preferred to stay in the UK. They were used to life in the UK and they found job opportunities were gloomy in their home countries. They wanted to settle down in the UK and to have their own family.

In the 1960s, many of these Asian men went back to their home countries to get married by means of 'arranged marriages'. They then came back to Britain with their wives. After the formation of their families, as these Asian men needed to sustain their family, their employment tended to be more stable to obtain income which was more reliable. They wished to settle down and some of them had spent their working life in a single company, if they had been allowed to. Sondhi (UK22, M/47, Indian) had spent 26 years in a factory; Manjit (UK24, M/52, Indian), 23 years in the same foundry.

Racial Discrimination in the Workplace and in the Community

Many immigrant workers were not allowed to settle down either in the labour market or in the community. Institutional racial discrimination and harassment in the workplace and community limited their choices of jobs and made them move around different low-skilled and low-paid jobs. Sometimes they even faced a downward mobility in their career as a direct result of the interaction of racial discrimination and harassment and their action to avoid discrimination and harassment.

The experience of Mohammed (UK04, M/40, Pakistani) clearly demonstrates how institutional racial discrimination and harassment may exert a downward pressure on the career of Asian male workers. In other words, ethnic domination acts as a powerful sorting mechanism, assigning

these Asian male workers into a class position of an extremely low-skilled and low-paid type.

Mohammed emigrated to Britain in 1962 when he was eight years old. He left school at 16 years of age. He took up a job in General Electric Company (GEC) straight away. The plant was an assembly line of electronic appliances. The pay was around £20/week and the working time was 40 hours/week. After only two weeks of work in the GEC, he was accused of stealing things from the factory by a foreman. He said that he had never stolen anything.

Mohammed: 'I asked them to search my house and my belongings. If they couldn't find anything, I would go as far as the courts to clear my name. The following morning, the foreman [a white man] came to apologise as they had caught another worker who actually stole the goods. Within two weeks, they told me I was not able to keep their standard and that I had to go.'

After that, he could only find an unskilled job in a small car seat engineering factory. The pay was extremely low, at just £5 per week. However, Mohammed accepted it and worked there for eighteen months. Mohammed recalled, 'To me, in those days it was quite a lot. I couldn't find jobs in other factories.'

However, migrant workers actively fought against the exploitation and discrimination against them. They demanded that they should be granted the full rights of citizenship and should enjoy the same family reunion, political and welfare rights as the mainstream. The successive tightening of the immigration laws by the British government in 1962, 1968 and 1971

successfully removed the rights of colonial and Commonwealth citizens to full British citizenship (Cohen 1987). However, these tightenings of immigration policy could not prohibit the reunion of family members of those marginal workers who had already entered Britain. The settling down of their family members in Britain marked their transformation from migrant worker communities to ethnic minority communities. The reunion with the family also meant that their super-exploitation as migrant workers was no longer possible. Ethnic minority workers demanded they should have a minimal level of wages so that they could care for themselves and their families. In other words, the reproduction cost of the ethnic minorities could not be externalised. New sources of marginal workers had to be found. British capital, therefore, turned to utilising the labour power of married women in the 1960s.

The 1960s: Part-time Women Workers

Part-time women workers under the gender division of labour have provided an extra cheap and flexible workforce for the expanding manufacturing industry since the 1960s. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the number of women in the labour force increased by more than 1.5 million with an increasing proportion of them working on a part-time basis. Most of the increase in female employment in the years 1960 to 1970 was due to the increase in the number of women working part-time (Department of Employment Gazette, Nov. 1973: 1088).

In 1950, the percentage of female part-time workers among female manufacturing workers was 11.8 per cent, which steadily increased to 13.2 per cent in 1960. The rising trend became more significant in the second half of the 1960s. The rate then increased to 19.7 per cent in 1970. Over this period, female employment in the manufacturing sector was declining. However, the number of women working part-time increased. This illustrates that there was a fairly large-scale shift towards the creation of part-time jobs as manufacturing industry adapted itself to attracting an increasing number of housewives into the labour force (Department of Employment Gazette, Nov. 1973: 1088-1089).

Annual data on the proportion of women employees (aged 18 and over) who work on a part-time basis is also available from the Family Expenditure Survey. Defining part-time workers as those who work for 30 hours or less per week (excluding meal intervals but including overtime), the Family Expenditure Survey estimates that from 1963 to 1972 part-time women employees increased significantly from 37.5 per cent to 45.5 per cent of all female employees. Since the 1970s, the percentage of women in part-time work has stabilised at a level of just over 40 per cent, but in the 1970s part-time women's jobs have shifted from the manufacturing to the service industry. About 40 per cent of all employees in 1976 were women, of whom four out of ten were part-time workers. In 1976, nearly 85 per cent of female part-timers were employed in the service industries (Robertson and Briggs 1979).

The expansion in part-time work in women's jobs in the service sector resulted in a sharing out of female jobs and a reduction in hours worked. Part-time work was highly concentrated in a small number of industries, for example in hotel and catering 55 per cent work part time, in retail 47 per cent and in schools 41 per cent. Moreover, some 60 per cent of workers in these three industries and other services worked less than 16 hours a week, the level below which there is no protection (Watson 1992). The lack of employment protection for part-time workers provides the first advantage for employers to create more part-time jobs. The second advantage is the relative low cost of employing part-time workers to substitute full-time workers. A woman with a given education and employment history generally receives a lower wage offer in part-time employment than in a full-time job (Ermisch and Wright 1993).

Being engaged in part-time work brings various negative impacts to a woman's economic position. It reinforces a woman's role as a minor financial contributor within the family and leads to their lack of pension provision in later life (Ward et al. 1996). Moreover, most part-time employment in the UK provides work at low levels of skill, status, pay, training and promotion opportunities, and has reinforced gender inequalities both in the work place and home (Cousins 1994).

In short, employers take advantage of a woman's subordinated gender position to create low-paid and insecure part-time jobs. In the following section, I will introduce the life stories of two single white mothers, Jane and

Sandy. Their stories are representative of those white females, who are confined to the temporary and part-time employment of a “woman’s” jobs. We can see how the employers define and create such a segment of marginal jobs in order to exploit the vulnerable position of a woman. Moreover, the limited welfare provision of the state also limits a woman’s choice and forces her to accept the low pay, low security, and low prospects of female part-time work.

Jane: The Middle Aged Home-helper

Jane (UK26, F/57, white) was born in 1937. After she had finished her education in Liverpool, she worked as an unskilled worker in various factories. She then became a nurse in Cheltenham. In 1958, at the age of 21 she got married and moved to Birmingham.

In order to take care of her children, she gave up the nursing job. In 1970, at the age of 34, she began to work as a home-helper for social services. Her husband died in 1976 and she was left with four children to look after. However, she did not want to live on benefits. The home-helper’s wage was so low that Jane had to take up three jobs altogether to support her family. The stigmatisation effect on benefit receivers, accompanied by the emphasis on the value of ‘self-help’, has induced an extraordinary ‘hard-working’ attitude of the poor single mother.

Jane: 'I do a very odd job in the morning, eight to nine as a cleaner. I used to start home help from 9:30 to 2:00, then I got home and got my daughter and changed the uniform. Then I had the early odd jobs from 3:15 to 4:15. Then I used to do an evening job in the Probation Service, because I was much younger at that time. My husband had just died, I still had a ten-year-old daughter at home, so I had three jobs to support the family.'

Jane kept working at three jobs at the same time for about 5 years. She then found it was too much, so she took more hours in social services. For the home-helper job, Jane found that it involved more and more nursing jobs like washing and giving tablets. Despite the increasing workload and responsibility, the home-helpers got very low pay. The pay was just near £3 an hour. Jane considered that it was a "woman's wage".

Jane: 'It just covers all the costs. It's not really good pay nearly 3 pounds an hour. It just pays National Insurance and tax. You can't expect a man with such a wage to keep the whole family... It is enough for me because I am living on my own.'

Jane did think that the "woman's" wage was a kind of gender discrimination. She accepts it only because she had to maintain a basic life for her family. Moreover, since all her children were grown up and had moved away and she was 'on her own', the lack of family commitment had made her more 'flexible' or 'vulnerable' in obeying the orders of her boss.

Jane: 'Because I'm on my own, the boss always says, "Would you mind doing one or two days in the holiday?" I gave up my holiday and worked seven days a week.'

Being a single mother, Jane worked extremely hard to maintain a basic life for her family. She rejected help from the state. Her rejection of state help

is based on the self-help principle and values that are deeply rooted in the Protestant ethic and particularly in Methodist principles, which in turn are common to Jane's generation. To a certain extent, these ethics allow capital to employ women as low-paid part-timers. Because these women do not want to rely on the state, they take up any jobs offered in the market, as shown in Jane's case.

Sandy: The Young Casual Worker

Sandy (UK12, F/34, white) was born in 1960. In 1977, owing to personal and family problems, Sandy left her family and her full-time education at the age of 17. She then took up numerous part-time, temporary low-paid jobs, all of which are indeed considered to be a "woman's job". The high mobility of Sandy in these low-paid jobs confirms my thesis that marginal workers move around different types of marginal jobs, like part-time, temporary, casual jobs.

During her A-levels, Sandy wanted to earn money to support her studies. She worked from 6:00 o'clock to 9:00 o'clock in the morning for the YMCA as a part-time house cleaner making beds and cleaning and again from 6:00 o'clock to 9:00 o'clock in the evening as a part-time office cleaner.

Sandy then became a part-time maid. The main reason for Sandy working as a chambermaid was that she wanted to leave her family. Working as a chambermaid provided her with free accommodation and meals. She

worked there for about six to seven months. Since she wanted to travel, she quit her job.

From the experiences of young Sandy, we learn that the part-time nature of a woman's job may not just be an adaptation to the labour market due to a married woman's need to 'care for' family as in the case of Jane. In fact, we find that many single women, like Sandy, are engaged in several part-time jobs. The total working hours of these discrete part-time jobs may be longer than that of a full time job. To management, one of the benefits of dividing full-time jobs into more part-time jobs is that these part-timers are not entitled to any protection under labour laws.

Eventually, Sandy was on the dole, but at the same time, working in a small bookshop. It was a kind of shadow job and the employer tried to exploit her. Because the employer knew that she was on the dole, he paid her just £20 per week. Sandy stated that her dole money was only the small amount of £30, which she used to pay the rent. This is why she had to work in the shadow economy.

In 1986, she was wholly on the dole again. Because all her dole money was spent on rent for a privately rented home, she did baby-sitting for her landlady. The landlady reduced the rent from £30 to £25, for a tiny room. For just £5, she spent four hours a day doing the babysitting. She thought that it was a certain kind of exploitation, but there was no other kind of private accommodation. After paying the rent, she literally lived on £5 a week. She

used to buy noodle soup and eat one packet a day with an egg. Moreover, this was her only meal.

In this case, we find how a white woman (the landlady) exploits another white woman (Sandy) with the help of the welfare system. It is the domination of the state over welfare recipients, which enables and facilitates management's domination over these 'marginal workers' and creates the super-exploitation of these marginal workers.

We have seen how Jane and Sandy at different times in their lives work as part-time, temporary and casual workers. The two women are single mothers at some stages of their life: Jane is widowed and Sandy was left in the position of being a single parent. They try their best to support their children with all they can do. However, the under-provision of child-care services has restricted choice for these women.

The 1970s: From Migrant Workers to Ethnic Minorities

The entry of workers from the New Commonwealth almost stopped after 1962, partly owing to the introduction of severe restrictions through the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962, and partly as the result of the early onset of economic stagnation in Britain (Castles and Miller 1993: 202).

Some of the Asian and Caribbean migrant workers in the 1950s and 1960s returned to their home countries. However, some of them, especially those younger in age, stayed behind in Britain. They went back to their home

countries to get married and subsequently rejoined with their wives and children in Britain. These migrants settled down in their own communities. Furthermore, the second and third generations of these migrants were born and reared in Britain. The term 'migrant workers' changed to 'ethnic minorities' in the 1970s and the term still applies. Although the reunion of the family members of migrants was restricted by the 1971 Immigration Act, the population of New Commonwealth origin increased to 1.2 million in 1971 and 1.5 million in 1981.

From the estimates of the Labour Force Survey, between 1985 and 1990 the proportion of the population who identified themselves as ethnic minority groups varied between 4.4 per cent and 4.8 per cent of the population aged 16 and over. Thereafter, this rose progressively to 5.8 per cent in 1992 (Sly 1994: 148).

The Self-employed in Small Businesses

After the economic recession in 1973, many Asian male workers in manufacturing industry were made redundant. A high proportion of them then started their own small businesses and became self-employed as a survival strategy. Their redundancy compensation provided part of the initial capital. The pooling of financial and labour resources from members of their extended families also helped. Moreover, Asian women provided the necessary family labour, paid or unpaid, for these small workshops, corner shops, take-away shops and so on.

The first generation of Asian male workers adopted a survival strategy of becoming self-employed. They were joined by their second and third generations, who faced limited career mobility because of institutional racial discrimination in the mainstream labour market. The major reason for the Asians' entry into self-employment was the desire to avoid racial discrimination and the resulting confinement to low status jobs in the labour market (Aldrich et al. 1981).

According to LFS (Spring 1986 to 1988), 27 per cent of men of Indian origin and 23 per cent of men of Pakistani/Bangladeshi origin were self-employed, whereas only 15 per cent of the white population were in self-employment. This higher proportion of Asian males engaged in self-employment continued into the 1990s. In 1993, 25 per cent of men of Indian and Pakistani/Bangladeshi origin were in self-employment, compared with only 16 per cent among white males (Sly 1994: 151-2).

Homeworkers

While many Asian male workers became self-employed in their small businesses, Asian women became workers in small workshops manufacturing garments. Many of them simply worked in their homes so as to fulfil their domestic responsibility and to work as a waged worker at the same time.

The 1971 Census estimates that there were 819,020 homeworkers in Britain, of whom 342,320 were women. The 1981 Census estimates a smaller number of 777,170 people engaged in home-based work. The Homeworking

Survey 1981 (England and Wales) reports that there were 628,350 home-based workers. Among the 294,590 female home-based workers, 177,860 of them were working at home, and 60,270 were working in the manufacturing industry. However, Allen and Wolkowitz (1987) argue that the official surveys may have underestimated the number of women homeworkers in manufacturing industry.

Felstead and Jewson (1997) worked on the 1991 Census and gave a breakdown of the number of homeworkers in various areas. The largest numbers of homeworkers were found in the major urban and industrial areas: Birmingham (11,000), Leeds (9,700) and Sheffield (6,940). The Women's Unit of Birmingham City Council (1993) estimates that there are about 8,000 homeworkers in the clothing sector alone. The AKETA Project (1988) reports that through the 1970s and the 1980s a new locally based clothing industry had emerged to supply the volatile fashion market in the West Midlands region. Both the employers and employees were drawn almost wholly from local communities of Asian origin. The 'new' West Midlands clothing industry employed some twenty to thirty thousand factory workers as well as a substantial number of homeworkers, estimated by some to amount to ten to fifteen thousand.

Self-employment as a Survival Strategy

Since the 1970s, the UK has undergone significant deindustrialisation. Asian male workers, most of whom are unskilled or semi-skilled workers in the manufacturing industry, find themselves being the first to be made

redundant. Low education levels, poor skills and racial discrimination act as barriers preventing them going back into the labour market. It is increasingly difficult for them to find jobs in other factories. The 'survival strategy' of Asian male workers is to use their redundant money to create jobs to 'help themselves' (Ram 1992).

Sondhi: 'People who came here in the 50's, they are now 55 or 60. By now, they don't work in the factory. They were made redundant. Nobody will get them a job in the factory. The only way is that they have to help themselves. So they started open shop, starting business. They are working on their own. Family put their money in one pool and started like shops and small units.' (UK22)

Support from the extended family, both financial and in terms of human resources, is often quoted as the unique reason why the Asians would like to start a small business. Avtar, the chairman of the Indian Workers Association (IWA) concurred during his interview.

Avtar: 'Within the Indian Community, they can borrow money from the others, and they make use of their labour in a family system, man, woman, child, father, mother. This is not practical in the white community.'

Besides starting up small businesses, some Asian men become self-employed for example, as taxi drivers. Structural changes in the economy combined with the disadvantaged position of Asians, have isolated them in a particular segment in the labour market and transformed their class position from proletariat to petty bourgeoisie.

However, the transformation of their class position is neither complete nor without tension. Some consider that being self-employed is only a temporary measure to support themselves and their families, and that they

are still keen to work as an employee. Mohammed (UK04) worked as a taxi driver after working for ten years as a driver for different bus and coach companies. He was still keen to be back as an employee.

Mohammed: 'What they called me is self-employed. I pay my own tax and National Insurance. But it's only temporary. If the season comes, I will go back on coach.'

Another informant argues that their becoming self-employed is in fact a resistance to their 'downgrading' or 'unskilling' done by the management. Aneil (UK41, M/36, Pakistani) had spent 5 years studying to be a motor mechanic and worked for five years in the Fire Services as a skilled motor mechanic. However, owing to a reshuffle in the service, he was asked by the City Council to work as a driver on the airport runway. Aneil rejected the offer, and chose to become a self-employed motor driving instructor.

Aneil: 'Having this [a clause] in the contract, they can get you sweeping floors. Although it was nothing wrong with sweeping floors, I found that the job status was going down. I decided not to take it, because of the status.'

Other Asian male workers also cited 'independence' as their reason for setting up their own businesses. I interpret it as a sign of their resistance to the exploitation of capital and to racial discrimination in the labour market. Raj (UK36, M/50, Indian), owner of a corner-shop and a off-licence, answered why he wanted to start his business,

Raj: 'I'm thinking independence. You're your own boss, you have no pressure. Every time you got sacked, you know you want to have your own business.'

However, opening a small business like a corner shop is in fact an act of self-exploitation of themselves and their family. The extremely long working hours and working days in a year reflect the degree of self-exploitation. Raj has one grocery shop and one off-licence. He works from six o'clock in the morning till eleven in the evening with minimal rest in between. His brother also works the same long hours as Raj. Moreover, both of their wives were working in the shops. Their wives, at the same time, were responsible for the housework and caring for the children. They opened seven days a week with no rest day. Its self-exploitative nature to some extent nearly resembles that of 'unfree labour'. Sondhi (UK22), a factory worker, claims that he does not want to open a business, because of this unfree nature of a small business.

Sondhi: 'I know more and more of my friends who held this business, who work seven days a week. They can't leave their shops even on Sunday, even to attend a wedding or meeting family and friends. They can't close the shop. There is no time. That is why I never thought of it.'

Homeworking: The Racial and Gender Discrimination against Asian Women

Asian women workers not only face the same institutional racial discrimination as Asian men workers, but also experience patriarchy or gender domination. Many of the Asian women worked as homeworkers for their male counterparts. Other are tied to either the family business or the domestic work of the family or both. However, some women advocate the overthrow of such gender domination.

Daksha (UK01, F/35, Indian) emigrated to Britain in 1970, when she was about 19 years old. She could not speak English proficiently. In 1980, when she had her first child, she stopped working outside the family. She had been working as a homeworker for seven or eight years before our interview. It was a necessary supplement to her income, especially after her husband died in 1990.

Daksha stated that the garment factories in Birmingham were mainly run by Punjabis. Daksha explained that since they could not get jobs from white people, they opened their businesses and employed their relatives and fellow Punjabis.

The work was low-paid. The wage for sewing one garment might be as little as 20 pence. While she worked, she needed to work five to six hours a day. The work tempo was very fast. She considered working in factories as 'proper' work while homeworking was improper. She prefers working in factories to homeworking. However, she had to look after her four children so that she could not go outside the family to work even in a part-time job.

The supply of homework was very irregular. She had not received any work for three months. The agent whom she originally worked with did not supply any work. There was plenty of work around the community and there were other agents. All of them were Asians. However, she thought that the pay was insufficient. She would rather not have work at all than to have a job at such a low wage.

Daksha: 'I've once worked outside. I know my own rights. Some other women do not know their rights.'

Moreover, she was dependent on benefits so if she earned more than the limit, her benefit would be cut. She thought that it was not worthwhile working. It was probably because the most she could earn was just a few pounds more than the unemployment benefit. Nevertheless, if she went out to work, her children might also lose the entitlement to free meals, free prescriptions and other benefits.

Neelam (UK25, F/45, Indian) did not work when she was in India and after her marriage. Neelam recalled that, 'It was not common in those days for Indian women to work outside the family'.

In 1978 when Neelam's second child was five years old, she started to work as a sewing machinist, through which she learnt how to use a sewing machine. Then, her sister asked her to work in a factory opened by her brother-in-law. They offered her 75 pounds per week, which was the same as she was earning at that time.

Neelam: 'I actually do not like it. I've got a health problem. I have to take tablets everyday. If I go somewhere else, they may put some pressure on me. It's too hard to accept it. In here, they know that, they don't put any pressure on my working. I can go anytime and come back anytime...I can't do other things. That's my problem. I'm old.'

The case of Neelam shows that working for family members may enable her to enjoy some more understanding and have some more flexibility.

However, it may not be true for other cases. Jenny, who worked as a family worker in a Chinese take-away had a different story to tell.

Patriarchy in the Family Business

Jenny (UK18, F/47, Chinese) was a factory worker before she got married in Hong Kong in 1967 when she was 19 years old. Her husband emigrated to the UK first in 1968 as a catering worker. Jenny went to the UK with her two daughters two years later. They started a fish and chip shop. Jenny complained about her unpaid family labour status that made her dependant on her husband.

Jenny: 'I was not used to living without an income. I earned my own income for myself before I married. However, when I worked in the first fish and chip shop and take-away, I didn't have any wage. I had to ask my husband for every expense. I didn't have money to buy small things I wanted.'

Moreover, she was pregnant again, but still had to work very hard in the shop. Jenny blamed her ignorance of family planning which had made her get pregnant several times. In 1979, Jenny's fifth daughter was born. They opened up a take-away in 1980 with the help of her mother-in-law. It was the first time that they had really rented a place permanently to run their own business. Jenny's mother-in-law insisted that Jenny and her husband should own it jointly to prevent Jenny's husband from selling the shop.

Jenny did not want to be an unpaid family worker any more. She demanded her own money and income. Her husband then paid her £40 per week. To a certain extent, Jenny found that through the take-away she could

earn money. She could earn about £160 a week. However, she also felt isolated and bored. Like her husband, Jenny started to play Mah-jong. The money involved in Mah-jong was enormous. She might lose or win £120-£200 per day. Playing Mah-jong and gambling during the night after they had closed their take-away, was the only 'recreation' or leisure that they could enjoy.

Moreover, their children needed to help the take-away business by working behind the counter when they were young. As they grew older, they had to help in the kitchen or even became the cook. Their children did not want to help much. However, their father wanted to make more money and did not want to employ more people. If Jenny's husband was not happy, he would beat up the children.

Since 1987, Jenny had suspected her husband was having an affair with another woman. When Jenny asked him, he punched her in the eye and on her chest. After continuing difficulties in her marriage, Jenny was really thinking of divorce at the time of interview.

Jenny's story vividly delineates the interplay of class and gender relations for minority women. The disadvantaged position as a woman put Jenny first into a subordinated position as an unpaid family worker. Her previous working experience as a factory worker in Hong Kong proletarianised her and made an indelible mark on Jenny's consciousness: she demanded that she had to be paid for family labour. She knew that economic independence was the first step to her social independence. As Jenny has

learned all the skills of the business of running a take-away, she really got a chance to become a small business entrepreneur. Her new class position indeed provided an important basis for her revolt against her husband's oppression and provided an important source of power for her to change her subordinated gender position.

The 1980s: The Shadow Economy Worker

The Rise of the Long-term Unemployed

Economic restructuring and deindustrialisation took place in the 1970s. After the Thatcher government implemented tight monetary policies, the number of unemployed people in Britain increased enormously. According to the statistics reported in various issues of Employment Gazette, in 1973 only 484,300 persons were unemployed and the unemployment rate¹⁰ was as low as 2.1 per cent in Great Britain. In 1976, the number of unemployed people increased to 1,304,600 and the unemployment rate was 5.6 per cent. The situation significantly worsened from the late 1970s under the rule of the Thatcher Government. In 1981, 2,628,400 persons were unemployed and the unemployment rate increased to 11.1 per cent. High unemployment persisted in the early 1980s. The unemployment rate stayed at 11.7 per cent in 1986, and then decreased to 5.6 per cent in 1990. In the early

¹⁰ The figure is the 'claimant count' derived from the administrative system for paying unemployed-related benefits at Employment Service Local Offices.

1990s, owing to the economic recession, the unemployment rate rose again to 10.2 per cent in 1993.

The Unemployed Ethnic Minorities

The unemployment problem in the 1980s and the 1990s made a more adverse and longer-lasting impact on the ethnic minorities than on white people in the UK. Ethnic minorities, especially young ethnic minorities, were more likely than white people to be unemployed. According to the LFS from Spring 1986 to 1988, 466,000 unemployed 16 to 24 year olds were from ethnic minorities. The ILO unemployment rate¹¹ of ethnic minority youth was 25 per cent, compared with 15 per cent for white youth. The problem of unemployment was prominent among the youth of Pakistani/Bangladeshi, and West Indian and Guyanese origin, whose unemployment rate was 31 per cent and 28 per cent respectively. For Indian and other ethnic minority youth, their unemployment rate was 22 per cent (Employment Gazette, March 1990, Table 7, p.133).

Not only was the unemployment rate for ethnic minority youth higher than for white youth, but also the ILO unemployment rate for all age groups of ethnic minorities was also higher than that of white people. The

¹¹ There are two series of employment rates in Britain compiled by the Employment Department. The first series is the 'claimant count' which is based on the number of persons claiming unemployment benefit. The second series is the 'ILO unemployment rate', which is based on the three basic criteria: no work, actively seeking work and available to work proposed by the ILO to classify persons as unemployed. The ILO unemployment rate is generally greater than the claimant count, because not all the 'ILO unemployed' would claim unemployment benefit. The use of the ILO unemployment rate offers greater comparability of unemployment rates in international as well as historical contexts. The ILO unemployment rate is not affected by the changing criterion for claiming unemployment benefits set by the government. However, most of the press and media in the UK quote the 'claimant count' as the official 'unemployment rate', which can be easily understood by the public. Following this tradition, I will refer to the 'claimant count' unemployment rate as the 'unemployment rate', whereas I will specify 'ILO unemployment rate' in the paragraphs when I use this series of statistics.

data of the LFS illustrates that people of ethnic minority are more likely to be unemployed than white people of the same age and sex group. For ethnic minorities, the overall unemployment rate of all aged 16 and over was 17 per cent; compared with 10 per cent for white people over the period 1986 to 88. The highest unemployment rates were among the Pakistanis/Bangladeshis and West Indians/Guyanese: for the former, 27 per cent for all aged 16 and over and for the latter, 19 per cent.

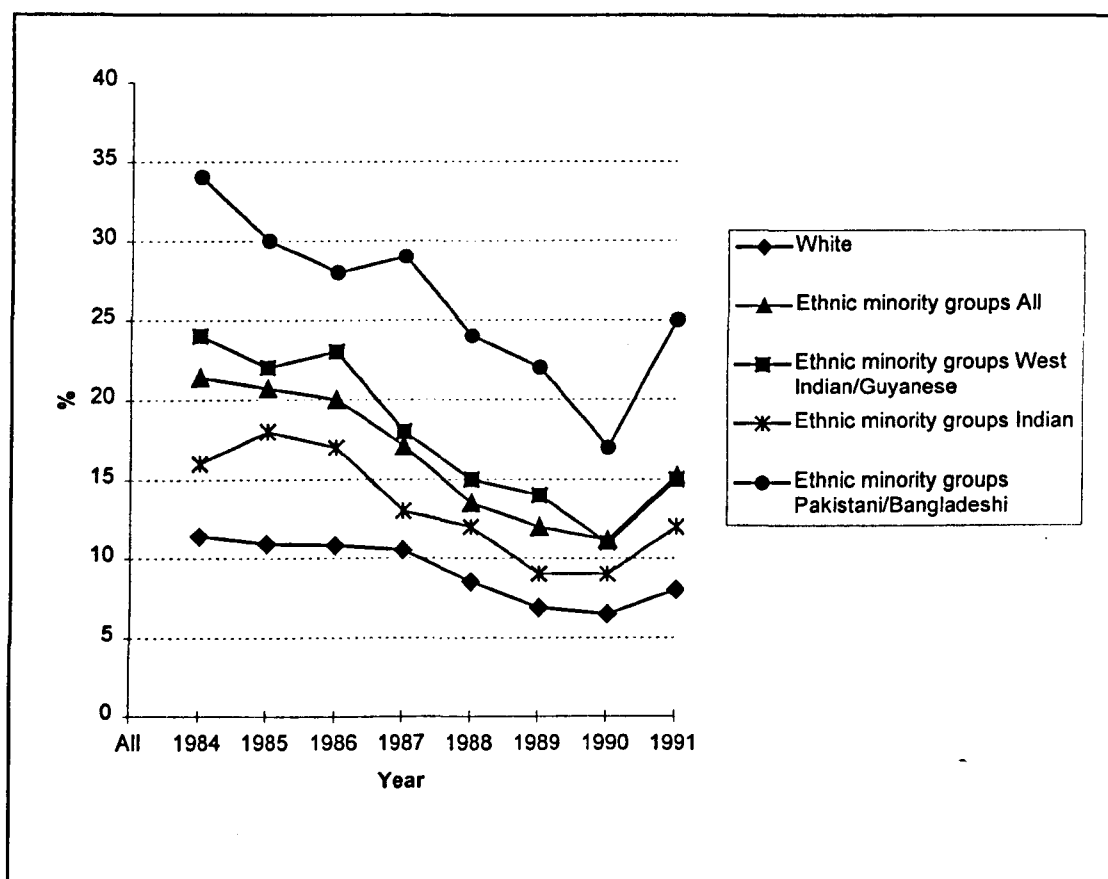


Figure 5.3: Trends in ILO Unemployment Rates by Ethnic Origin, Great Britain, Spring 1984 to Spring 1991.

Source: Employment Gazette, February 1993, Table 11, p.42.

Figure 5.3 shows the ILO unemployment rates of different ethnic origin groups from 1984 to 1991. In 1984, 1985 and 1986, the ILO

unemployment rate of ethnic minority groups was nearly twice that of the white population. In the following four years, the ILO unemployment rate of ethnic minority groups was generally lower in relative terms, at a level around two-thirds above that of the white group. However, the 1991 level in relative terms was higher and again similar to the level of 1984, 1985, and 1986. These figures suggest the unemployment problem was more significant among the ethnic minorities in particular the Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and Afro-Caribbeans.

Apart from 'black' workers, the Irish are also more likely to be unemployed among the white population. We have said earlier that the Irish were concentrated in manual jobs in the manufacturing and construction industries in the 1950s and 1960s. Most of them stayed in Britain and entered their middle and old age in the 1980s and 1990s. Many of these Irish males remained single and were more likely than other male members of the white population to be unemployed. Woolford (1994) highlights the results of the Labour Force Survey in 1993 which showed that there were some 444,000 Irish nationals residing in Britain (excluding Northern Ireland). Over half of these were aged over 50 with more than a quarter aged over the state retirement age. Among all Irish males over 65, those who were single constituted 13 per cent, which was more than double the equivalent proportion for the rest of Britain (6%). Irish men had a higher ILO unemployment rate (19%) than other males in Britain (12%). Of the Irish nationals in employment, 16 per cent worked in the construction industry compared with only 7 per cent for the rest of the population. It is obvious

that the Irish are still concentrated in the 'cash' jobs of the construction industry.

There is a long-lasting trend that men are more likely than women to be unemployed. In 1993, 68 per cent of the total unemployed were men. In 1994, many of the unemployed (42%) were in long-term unemployment¹² and ILO unemployment rates were highest among ex-employees of the construction industry (23%) and manufacturing industry (other than metal goods, engineering, vehicles) (14%). The ILO unemployment rate for manual workers was 13 per cent, compared with 6 per cent for non-manual workers (Woolford et al. 1994). The above figures demonstrate that the long-term unemployment problem of male manual workers, who formerly worked in the construction and manufacturing industries, persisted throughout the 1980s and the 1990s.

The high level of unemployment, combined with the tightening of unemployment welfare provision by the Thatcher Government, has compelled unemployed workers to sustain their survival by covertly working in the shadow or informal economy. Portes et al. (1989) suggests that the main feature of the shadow economy or informal economy is the absence of institutional regulation of the status of labour. For example labour may be undeclared, lacking the social benefits to which it is entitled, and paid under the minimum wage. In Britain, many workers in the building, agriculture and industrial cleaning industries are believed to be working in the shadow

¹² People in 'long-term unemployment' are defined by the Employment Department as those people without a job and seeking work for a year or more.

economy doing work that is undeclared for purposes of National Insurance (NI) and taxation. Most of these workers in the shadow economy are claimants of unemployment benefit, so they are forced to accept lower pay compared to an ordinary worker for this 'underground' work.

Survival in the Shadow Economy

In the following section, I will illustrate how the long-term unemployed informants are involved in the shadow economy. Most of these informants were males who had been working as manual unskilled workers in the manufacturing and building industries. I have already shown how Asian male workers opened small businesses as a survival strategy in the face of the redundancy crisis accompanying the de-industrialisation process. White male workers, however, do not have support from an extensive family network, as Asians do, to start their own businesses. Being redundant involuntarily or voluntarily, they find that the labour market for unskilled male workers has been deteriorating quickly. They find the pay is not fair for a fair day's work. Their working experience and participation in the organised labour movement has created a resistance to 'shit' work and they insist on having a 'decent' job.

However, after deindustrialisation, they found that all the jobs were low-paid, had low security, and were of a temporary or part-time status. They could hardly find a decent job in the labour market. They became dependent on the provision of the state unemployment benefit to support their basic existence. Some of them, like Stephen, needed to work in the shadow

economy to 'top up' their dole money to improve their subsistence level of living. The shadow economy for these unskilled male manual workers is mainly in the construction industry and industrial cleaning work. However, the shadow economy is brought into existence by employers, who try to make use of the loopholes in tax legislation, social insurance and welfare benefits, to facilitate their 'super-exploitation' of the marginal workers.

The White Minorities: The Irish

Stephen (UK07, M/35, Irish) was born in 1959. His father worked in a car-manufacturing factory as a semi-skilled manual worker. His father and mother came from Ireland where they used to work as farmers. In 1975, when Stephen was 16, he left school and joined the army for three months. He then worked as a guard for British Rail, and then at Rover, where his father was working. This was his longest job in his career history. He worked there for three and a half years.

He then had numerous casual jobs as a construction worker, photography laboratory worker, and in video making. For six to seven years, he had been on the edges of the film or photography industry. At the time of the interview, he expressed the wish to work as a free-lance journalist.

Survival Strategy: Income from the Shadow Economy

Stephen had been on and off the dole for six years. He considered the level of existence provided by unemployment benefit as minimum. Yet, he

knew then how to work with the rules of the benefit system and top up his income by working in the shadow economy. This is his survival strategy.

Stephen: '£38 a week. Basic food, electricity and gas. You also get the rent. You cannot get enough transport. The level is so low, you must engage in the shadow economy or get a low pay job...If I get a little money, I declare it. If I get a large sum, I don't declare it. I worked in a certain kind of shadow economy. You can put your income into your business account, which does not include your name. A lot of casual jobs with a false name and identity. Their employer treats them as self-employed. They don't pay tax and N.I., such as pickers in agriculture and industrial cleaning when the factories are on holiday.'

Stephen also described how he worked along with many other Irish in the shadow economy as a brick-layer in the building industry in 1987 and 1988.

Stephen: 'On the tax form you declare yourself as self-employed. Although you work as a labourer, they treat you as a building firm. For tax purposes, you get a form each week. The employer should deduct tax from your pay, then you reclaim the tax later. That is how the whole system works.'

The shadow economy is, to some extent, created by welfare state policies. Employers seize the opportunity to make more profit by employing those unemployment benefit claimants at a lower wage and in worse working conditions, which are outside of the basic regulations of the state.

Stephen explained how marginal workers were exploited by capital and pushed into a disadvantaged position. The fact that marginal workers cannot challenge their employers is the main difference between those on the dole and those with work.

Stephen: 'If you're unemployed, you work in the shadow economy or contract work. You can't challenge your employer because they will report you to the state. The people you really worry about are those of the state, the employment department and social services.'

Looking for a Decent Job

When Stephen was asked why he kept going on and off the dole and just got temporary jobs, he responded,

'I could get a low pay permanent job very easily, but I don't want to throw away all my hopes and aspirations... I don't want to spend the rest of my life in shit work. Lots of people on the dole resist taking up a low-paid job, because it is not practical. My income, including rent, is about £150 to £170 on the dole. If I go to these jobs, I will be worse off. No skill, no prospects, nothing forever.'

The 'Never-employed' Black Male: Joe

While unskilled white male manual workers face the threat of long-term unemployment, their black counterparts face a more chronic crisis. They are not 'unemployed' but 'never-employed' at all. The institutional racial discrimination of the state and the mainstream white community have jointly excluded them from mainstream employment.

Joe (UK42, M/30, Afro-Caribbean), a black male of Jamaican origin, was born in Britain in 1965. His father was a painter. Joe finished his education at 16 years of age in 1981. He was involved in a fighting incident, so he was ordered to participate in a Youth Opportunity Scheme (YOS). In the scheme, he mowed the lawn or did painting for the elderly. He thought that the training was inadequate and he only received £25 a week.

Victimisation of Black People by the State

Joe thought that he was one of 'Thatcher's kids' victimised by the introduction of harsh legislation against youth delinquents.

Joe: 'The time I left school is 1981. We are Thatcher's kids. They just get in and feet under the table and then they bring out all these laws. Because I got sort of trouble outside school in the early 80's. Petty crime it was. Factually, they brought out this mean law, which they called "Short Sharp Shock", and got youngsters. They sent them to detention centres for 3 to 6 months.'

Racial Oppression by the State

Joe also stated that because he was black, he was unfairly treated by the state. The white boys, who had committed the same crime with him, had not been sentenced.

Joe: 'There were even bits of racial discrimination in there. Most of them don't go to jail, but they done as much as me. Two of us are as the gang who went to jail. It happened to me that I was the only black.'

The 'Never-employed' Black Youth

Joe finished school in 1981 then participated in three to four training schemes for youth. Nevertheless, Joe found that it was meaningless, 'It is waste of time really. I can say I learn nothing.'

Joe said that he had never had any full-time jobs. Worse still, he never received genuine help from the government.

Joe: 'Basically, I never have sort of full-time job, since I left school. That's the bottom line. Anything I got from me. They don't give me a hand, get in anything together. What I got, I've done it by myself, apart from the family, of course.'

Joe, like other black youths, became 'never-employed' since they had left school. After the training scheme, Joe could only get casual jobs.

Joe: 'I've done a lot of casual work through out the years, that's labourer. I have a bit in roads, building trade, as assistant labourer. I get pay in declaring form...I wasn't self-employed. I like get the money from the builder who was self-employed. Just cash.'

Joe regarded it as hard work. The working hours were long, nearly nine to ten hours a day, and the pay was roughly about £25 a day. This extra money made him in a better position than the others who were also on the dole. Nonetheless, being better off was only temporary.

Joe: 'It gets me a little bit above the rest of people, who in the poverty line as well. Basically what they does. They raised you for a while, get you a little bit straight, and then you back down where you were.'

The Making of 'Little Corner' by the State

Joe also complained that the introduction of valued added tax (VAT) and the poll tax by the government had pushed young people to crime.

Joe: 'They make every little corner. They make it more difficult for young people to survive. If you got no option for anything, or no option for any income, you might automatically turn to crime. If you put anybody in that position, instinct will take over... They didn't understand, it's tighten and tighten people'

On the Dole and Work Part-time

Joe was still on the dole while he was working as a part-time youth worker. He worked nine hours for a youth centre below the fifteen hours threshold. Joe declared that the unemployment benefit, not just the benefit in cash, but also other benefits and housing, were the essentials for his living. The part-time job in youth work, however, gave him a meaning to life; or in his own words, helped 'bring him back'.

Joe not only worked part-time for the youth centre, but also fancied working in the music industry as a singer or composer. He was a part-time disc jockey and recorded his own songs. From Joe's experience, it is clear that Joe had a high job motivation as he had shown interest in working. Nonetheless, he was not interested in a meaningless job.

The 1990s: The Part-time and Temporary Worker

The Growth of Part-time Workers

The increasing trend of part-time employment, especially that of women, has continued into the 1980s and even accelerated in the 1990s. From 1971 to 1994, part-time employee jobs increased by 2.6 million and the proportion of jobs that were part-time almost doubled from 15 per cent in 1971 to 28 per cent in 1994 (Naylor 1994). According to the LFS of 1994, part-time women employees increased from 4.0 million to 4.7 million from 1984 to 1994. White women were more likely than the ethnic minority

women to work part-time. In 1994, 46 per cent of white women employees were part-time workers, compared with 43 per cent of Pakistani/Bangladeshi, 33 per cent of Black and 31 per cent of Indians.¹³

Most part-time jobs generally are low-paid jobs and the average pay of part-time women is lower than that of part-time men. The New Earnings Survey estimates that in 1995 the average hourly pay of all part time employees on adult rates in Great Britain was £5.56, about 67 per cent of full-time hourly pay. The average hourly pay of women part-timers was £5.35, which was 78 per cent of the male average hourly pay of £6.89. Furthermore, numerous part-time workers were employed in lower-paid occupations. Almost a quarter of all part-time workers earned less than £3.50 per hour in April 1995, while almost two-thirds of part-timers earned less than £4.15 per hour (Osborne 1996).

Temporary Workers

Female workers are also engaged in temporary work,¹⁴ another source of jobs for marginal workers. Moreover, part-time and temporary jobs overlap. In 1996, 46 per cent of temporary workers were part-time. Around 60 per cent of female temporary employees in the Spring of 1996 were part-time, compared with less than 30 per cent of men (Sly and Stillwell 1997).

¹³ According to the definition of LFS, Black here includes Black Caribbean, Black African and Black Others.

¹⁴ Temporary jobs are defined as those jobs which are held by someone who has been recruited to do them for a finite period of time (although this may be up to several years). They include seasonal work, casual work, non-permanent jobs obtained through a temporary employment agency and jobs carried out under a fixed-term contract (Sly and Stillwell 1997).

The proportion of all employed people who were in temporary employment remained at around 5.5 per cent between 1984 and 1991. Around 10 per cent of employees in the public sector were temporary, compared with around 6 per cent in the private sector (Sly and Stillwell 1997). Since 1990, there has been an increase in both the number of temporary employees (1.6 million) and the proportion of all employees who were temporary, reaching 7.1 per cent of all employees in the Spring of 1996. In 1996, there were more women than men in temporary jobs, 861,000 and 696,000 respectively. Concomitantly, women temporary employees represented a greater proportion of employees (8.2% of all women employees) than men (6% of all men employees).

Temporary jobs have accounted for at least one-third of new job take-ups since 1984. Since 1992 around half of the temporary employees have been on a fixed-term contract or task. This suggests that a large proportion of jobs taken by the unemployed and new entrants to the labour market may be temporary.

Betty: The Old Court Recorder

Betty (UK13, F/67, white) was born in 1927 in Britain. She started working as a bank secretary at 20 and retired at the age of 60. From 1988, Betty then basically lived on state benefit, but at the same time she was engaged in a lot of temporary jobs as she 'didn't like to just receive benefit'. She worked as temporary clerk, part-time cleaner and even as a shopkeeper in a school.

In 1993, Betty found a part-time job as a court recorder at the age of 66 and she enjoyed the work. She was employed by an agency that arranged workers for the courts. She was an extremely 'flexible worker' as her work was irregular and on an on-call basis. She received a call at ten o'clock at night which asked her to work the next morning. She only got paid for the day she worked. Moreover, the working hours were not fixed but the wage was fixed at a daily rate. Her duty might end at noon, or at seven o'clock in the evening, but the wage was the same. Betty faced further exploitation from the agency and the state owing to the fact that her daily wage was cut from £30 to £25.

Betty: 'But they reduced that to £25 in April and said that it was because of changes in the courts themselves. They had to cut their budget. I have a feeling they'll try to do even more next month.'

Betty explained why the elderly and the disabled, who were mainly employed in these posts, were lacking in bargaining power.

Betty: 'This is what they said, "This is what we're doing. Either you agree with it or you don't agree with it. If you don't, you don't work." You don't have a choice. You don't have bargaining power. That is it. And you don't get sick pay, because they call it casual work. They only call you when they need you. So you have no rights at all really.'

Betty explained that owing to the limited amount of her state pension, she still wished to work under such unfavourable conditions.

Betty: 'Mind you, I couldn't manage without that money. I have a pension, a state pension, not a private pension. I get £64 a week from the state and also housing benefit. It's very difficult to live on it. You have bills to pay...So working a little bit of extra, doing extra work makes a tremendous difference to me...I still don't have a grand life style, but I still live comfortably.'

It is obvious that without enough retirement income protection from the state Betty and other pensioners are forced to accept these 'casual' jobs to earn a 'respectable' standard of living.

Single Mothers

Single mothers¹⁵ are more likely to be engaged in part-time work than other women, owing to the lack of low cost childcare services. Single mothers with young dependent children generally have a lower labour participation rate and are more prone to work part-time. Caribbean women were more likely to be single mothers than white women. According to the LFS of 1980, 12 per cent of households of West Indian and Guyanese origin were one adult with one or more children, compared with 2 per cent of the households of white origin.

The General Household Survey (GHS) 1996 reports that married and cohabiting women with dependent children were more likely than single mothers to be working and the difference has increased over time. From 1977 to 1979, just over half (52%) of married and cohabiting women with dependent children were working compared with two-thirds (66%) from 1994

¹⁵ Some writers use the term 'lone mothers' instead of 'single mothers'. I use the term 'single mother' and 'single parents', which most informants refer to themselves. Single parents include both single fathers and single mothers. However, I sometimes refer to single mothers as single parents.

to 1996. The proportion of single mothers working fell from 47 per cent to 42 per cent during the same period with most of the decrease occurring in the early 1980s. According to the LFS of 1996, the number of single-adult households (with and without children) had increased by over 70 per cent between 1986 and 1996. Single-adult households are also much more likely to have nobody in employment than households with more than one adult (Bell et al. 1997).

Table 5.3: Labour Market Status of Single Parents with Dependent Children, Great Britain, Spring 1997

Not seasonally adjusted

	Men		Women	
	Single Parents	All ^a	Single parents	All ^a
Economic activity rate (%)	67.7%	71.8%	50.8%	54.0%
Employment rate (%)	57.7%	66.0%	43.3%	50.9%
ILO unemployment rate (%)	14.8%	8.1%	14.7%	5.8%

^a People aged 16 and over.

Source: *Labour Market Trends*, December 1997, LFS 64.

The LFS estimates that there were 1.56 million female and 0.15 million male single parents with dependent children in the Spring of 1997. Referring to Table 5.3, single parents have lower economic activity rates and higher ILO unemployment rates than that of the whole population. For female single parents, their ILO unemployment rate was 14.7 per cent. This was about triple the unemployment rate (5.8%) of all the female working population. Furthermore, the economic activity rate of female single parents

was 50.8 per cent, compared with 54.0 per cent of all the female working population. Among the 715,000 unemployed women, 117,000 of them (16.4%) were single parents; but there were only 5 per cent of female single parents among the entire female working population. These figures show that single parents are more vulnerable in their class position, so that they are more likely to be inactive and unemployed than other households. Most of the single parents are trapped because of their childcare responsibility.

The Unemployed Single Parent

Caribbean Women: It is My Own Choice

In my interviews, many Caribbean women reported that it was their own choice to become single parents. To a certain extent, it can be considered as a conscious effort to resist male domination in the family by excluding a male partner. Martha (UK39, F/34, Afro-Caribbean) was born in 1958. In Britain, in 1977, when she was nineteen, she had her first daughter and then give birth to two more children in 1982 and 1984. Martha stressed that it was her own choice to become a single parent.

Martha: 'Yes it is my choice, definitely...I would say I was proud of my effort. I was go to create myself, my children. I make sure, I hope it stable enough. I know I can rely on me to do that.'

Extended Family Support

While Asians gain extended family support to start and run their businesses, Caribbean women also get critical support from their extended family to rear their children. They are actually not 'lone' parents, as they get

constant help from other members of the extended family. They indeed have organised their family lives in a wider community network. Martha recalled that she got very good support from her family.

Martha: 'I think when I have my eldest daughter, I got very good family support behind me. I've got my own brother and sisters. I got my mum and dad. I got a very very good family network..... For my first point to call, my family first. I wouldn't seek anywhere else.'

They are in fact depending on their extended family to get help rather than on state agencies. The generally preconceived image of the 'culture of poverty' or 'dependency culture' of the black single mother is simply not true.

The Welfare Trap of the Single Mother

However, we should not jump to the conclusion that support from the extended family can fulfil all the needs of single parent families, especially for those who live on benefits and on the dole. With limited state assistance and childcare services, many of these single women find themselves trapped in a desperate situation. They must leave their job to look after their children, especially when they are young.

In 1990 Anna (UK16, F/34, Afro-Caribbean), another Afro-Caribbean single parent, got pregnant. Anna could not afford the childcare so she had to leave her job. The childcare which cost £60 to £65 per week, was about three-quarters of her wage as a sales assistant. Anna considered that it was not worthwhile, so she decided not to work but to look after her child and live on benefit.

Anna: 'A place in the nursery costs £65 a week. It is really ridiculous, because you are not encouraged to move on. You are not encouraged by the state and the government. The government supposes that single parents just want baby-sitting in their home. It's not the case, it is not always.'

Anna also complained that she did want to work. She could find work, and she would like to work more as a part-time course facilitator, but it was the system that did not encourage her to take up more work. The reason was the more she earned, the government would take it back. It confirms that the policies of the state rather than the 'culture' or 'traits' of the underclass are the main reasons for their 'dependency' on welfare.

Anna: 'I get paid as a the trainee facilitator but because I'm on income support, I can only earn £15 on top of that. Because I earn more, they take it back again. But my childcare for the session costs me £7, so for £15, I just got £8.'

These Caribbean single mothers consciously want to gain their independence against male domination in the family. However, most of them find themselves unable to pay for expensive childcare if they should leave the labour market. Virtually, they cannot live independently on their own income. This is contrary to their view and intention of usurping male domination, but they are trapped in the welfare system. In other words the childcare and benefit policies of the state create a marginal trap for these Caribbean women. The welfare trap situation was also shared by single mothers of other ethnic groups. Nevertheless, not only were welfare recipients trapped by welfare policies, but affluent male workers also found themselves experiencing a downward mobility and facing a marginal trap class structure.

The Marginal Trap Class Structure

Mobility within the class structure, the geographical concentration of production, as well as homogenous characteristics and experiences of residents in the neighbourhood community are critical factors in 'making' the working class. British mainstream workers experienced a long-term degradation amidst the declining economic performance and declining hegemony of Britain in the post Second World War world capitalist order. Since the 1970s, mass unemployment and the deindustrialisation process have created a 'marginal trap'. When more and more mainstream workers (or 'affluent workers' as others prefer) fell into the marginal class, only a few of them were able to climb up again into the mainstream class.

Marginal Trap

Table 5.4: Work History of Joseph (UK14)

Year	Age	Work and Life Events
1937	0	Born. Father was a semi-skilled production worker in Birmingham. Mother never worked and then worked as auxiliary nurse. His education was in a state school.
1952	15	Left secondary modern school. His education was partly interrupted by the war.
1952	15	Apprentice in general engineering in motor industry.
1953	16	Plumber's mate.
1955	18	Heating and ventilation apprentice.
1960	23	Heating and ventilation installer.
1963	26	Austin Motor factory worker.
1970	33	First daughter was born.
1976	39	Quality Controller (Q.C.) at Lucas Plastics.
1979	42	Inspector at Lucas (factory manufacturing electronic parts for Ford).
1985	48	Made redundant as Lucas closed the factory. Worker in a precision casting factory. Sacked after 13 months.
1987	51	Unemployed. 12 weeks on the dole. Skilled quality worker in a small air-craft components production company for 18 months.
1989	53	Finishing foreman on a building site.
1990	54	Made redundant. Back on the dole. Became a self-employed courier (sub-contractor working with the large courier firm). The firm bankrupt after a few months.
1990	55	Became a sub-contractor courier of a national firm.

Joseph: The White 'Affluent' Worker

Referring to Table 5.4, the work history of Joseph (UK14, M/57, white) shows how an 'affluent' white skilled worker experiences a 'marginal

trap' during the deindustrialisation of manufacturing industry in the 1980s and the casualisation of the workforce in the 1990s.

Joseph was born into a working class family and finished his secondary education after the Second World War. After moving around and receiving an apprenticeship in different trades, he neither settled down as a craft worker in the engineering trade, nor as a skilled worker in the construction trade. Like many workers in the post-war period who entered manufacturing industry, Joseph settled down and worked as a shop-floor worker at Austin Motors. The booming motor manufacturing industry enabled him to live as an affluent worker with secure employment and a rising standard of living .

Joseph benefited from this 'open' society with a significant upward mobility. From the age of 26 to 48, he spent 22 years in the motor and related industry. He was upgraded from an unskilled shop-floor worker to a quality controller, and finally as a quality inspector in the Lucas group. His affluence and upward mobility, however, lasted only until the late 1970s. Joseph described how the migration of capital, together with the decline of the motor industry, made him 'fall from grace'.¹⁶

Joseph: 'By the late 1970s, the motor industry was declining. The work in Lucas then dried up. They branched out into various activities and Lucas became a multinational company. The motor part became smaller and smaller. I was finally made redundant in 1985. They closed the factory.'

¹⁶ The phrase 'fall from grace' is adapted from Newman (1988).

Being a shop steward, Joseph tried to organise some resistance to the closure. However, there was no support from the workers. Lucas gave workers a year's notice and offered better compensation than statutory redundancy pay. Joseph recalled, 'The workers didn't want to take any action against the employer. They wanted to take their chances'.

In 1985, Joseph was made redundant. He began to live on the dole for the first time in his working life. He was unemployed for twelve weeks. Although Joseph was able to return to the labour market after just a short period of unemployment, his redundancy from Lucas started a new page in his working life. After moving upwards for about two-thirds of his working life, Joseph began to move down for the rest of his working life. Once mainstream workers fall into the marginal trap, they find it extremely hard to get out.

After his layoff, Joseph restarted as a skilled quality controller in a precision factory. After thirteen months of working, Joseph was then made redundant again just after he had finished his probation and assessment period. This time, he was dismissed in a more humiliating way than the previous dismissal at Lucas.

Joseph: 'On that Tuesday at 10 o'clock, we were told everything was OK, nothing to worry about. On the Friday, I was sacked. Along with me, twenty-four out of one hundred of the workforce were made redundant. We were surrounded by the guards and were ordered to leave the factory immediately.'

Joseph was then on the dole again for twelve weeks. He then got a job in a small aircraft component production company, a non-unionised shop.

The firm produced precision equipment for the nuclear fuel and aircraft industry. Joseph was recruited as a skilled worker in end-product inspection. However, Joseph hated the job and eventually left there after 18 months.

Joseph 'I hated it. If they thought you were worth it, you got a pay rise, or they may not give you a pay rise at all. Working conditions were quite bad. Consider that then it was 87/88. Sacking was quite common. The treatment of the people was thirty years out of date.'

He was then introduced by his friend to work as a finishing foreman in the building trade, and his friend became his boss in 1988. Unfortunately, after two years of work, he and his friend were both made redundant when the housing market went into recession. Joseph described how a desperate need for cash and work forces an unemployed person to become self-employed.

Joseph: 'For 8 to 10 weeks, I tried writing, phoning, going to interviews, going to the job centre. It was obvious that I couldn't get a job at all. I decided I needed to do something to get back earning. A friend was running a courier company. I went to see him. He said, "Get yourself a vehicle, a phone and they'll take you."'

Joseph then became a self-employed courier working for a large national courier firm. However, he was just a sub-contractor and was unprotected.

Joseph: 'The first company I worked with is a firm. Lots of people want to do it. It is very competitive. They hold your money for a month and then they pay you monthly. They always get a month in advance. You have no legal rights at all. They are responsible for nothing. You are responsible for insurance, tax, telephone. There were no holidays, nothing at all.'

As a self-employed courier, Joseph indeed became one of the thousands of marginal workers. He worked for extremely long, irregular and unsocial hours, especially with long-distance driving. Once Joseph worked for over twenty hours on the road with little rest, but the management still expected him to work. Since his income was unstable, Joseph found that he could not afford to turn down orders from the management. Joseph's experience shows lucidly the typical path of mobility of white mainstream workers who are in a marginal trap.

Table 5.5: Work History of Mohammed (UK04)

Year	Age	Work and Life Events
1954	0	Born in Pakistan. Father and mother were farmers.
1962	8	Emigrated to U.K. and reunited with father.
1970	16	Left secondary school and worked at GEC. He was accused by a foreman of having stolen things from the factory. Although another worker had been caught, he was fired after only two weeks work.
1970	16	Plastics factory worker, earning £15-£18/week.
1971	17	Car seat manufacturing worker, earning £5/week.
1974	20	First arranged marriage in Pakistan. Spent six months in Pakistan.
1974	20	Worker/truck driver/store keeper in a gas-meter manufacturing factory, £25 to £35/week.
1977	23	Car manufacturing worker in Vauxhall-Luton plant. Quit after one year because of home sickness.
1979	25	Wife's mental disorder. Divorced from first marriage. Bus driver hired by the West Midland's Bus, earning £180/week.
1980	26	Second marriage with an English woman.
1982	29	Bought a council house.
1986	31	Early retirement from West Midland's Bus owing to ill-health.
1987	33	Part-time coach driver for a small coach company.
1988	34	Coach driver, full-time, £3.25/hour. £3.40/hour of over-time.
1990	36	Coach driver for a small Indian Company, £3.60/ hour. Worked only six weeks because he did not receive his wage. Then worked as a coach driver for Shearing, a national coach firm. Quit after three and a half years because of racial harassment in the workplace.
1993	39	Could not find jobs because of the court case with management. Became a self-employed taxi driver.

Mohammed: The Asian Male

Black semi-skilled and unskilled workers were affected more seriously by mass unemployment than their white counterparts. The ethnic location of black workers contributed to a more intensive discrimination they had to face. Table 5.5, the work history of Mohammed (UK04) clearly depicts how ethnic discrimination in the workplace and the community pushes ethnic minority workers down into the marginal trap.

Mohammed first got a job at GEC after leaving secondary school. He was accused of stealing by a white foreman. Although the thief was caught, Mohammed was still sacked after two weeks working in GEC. He was forced to get by through low-paid jobs in small factories. In the early 1970s, the prosperous manufacturing industry provided an opportunity for Mohammed to move upwards; thus he was promoted from being a shop-floor worker to a store keeper.

Along with upward mobility, Mohammed also moved geographically to Luton and worked in the Vauxhall car manufacturing plant. However, since he was separated from his own family and community, he disliked the sense of isolation in a white dominated community. He moved back to Coventry after just one year of work in Luton. Social exclusion and isolation limit the chance for ethnic minorities from moving geographically to counteract the relocation process of capital. Ethnic minorities preferred to live together in the inner cities.

Mohammed then worked as a bus driver in Coventry. He retired early due to ill-health. He continued his working life by working as a part-time coach driver in small local firms and as a full-time long-distance coach driver in a national firm. Again racial harassment in the workplace made Mohammed lose his job in the coach company. Like Joseph, Mohammed was then forced to become a self-employed taxi driver with long working hours and low pay.

Joseph and Mohammed, among thousands of white and black mainstream 'affluent' workers, faced a long-term downward mobility in their career. They were being trapped in the position of marginal workers. Since the late 1970s, the aggregate effects of this downward mobility has contributed to the continual deposition of a marginal class, which results in a 'sedimentary class formation'.

Low Geographical Mobility

Robinson (1993) suggests that while the net 'flows' of white men and women are 'counter-urbanising', Pakistani men are circulating between the main conurbations. Both Pakistani women and West Indian males are relatively immobile. West Indian men and women both show a weak centrifugal movement out of Greater London and the West Midlands. However, for West Indian women there is also a centripetal movement to Greater London, a major concentration of service employment.

Following the basic logic proposed by Wilson (1987) when analysing the 'ghettoisation' of Chicago, I would like to offer an alternative explanation for the above migration flow through the class location of the various migrant groups. The 'counter-urbanisation' flow of white people represents their better class position, in that they have enough economic resources to migrate out of the inner cities and Greater London. The weak centrifugal flow of the Afro-Caribbean represents the decision of middle class Afro-Caribbeans to move out of the 'ghetto'. Pakistani women and Caribbean men, who occupy the most marginal location in the class structure, however, find themselves trapped in the inner cities. Moreover, if they receive welfare benefits, they are also more likely to live in council houses, which became a 'ghetto among ghettos' in the inner cities.¹⁷ Pakistani men, who were mainly unskilled workers in manufacturing industry in the 1970s, tried their best to survive by moving around cities. However, many of them attempted to settle down and open small businesses as a survival strategy after the continuous deindustrialisation and redundancies of the 1980s. Most of the Pakistani men settled down and opened small businesses by providing services to their own community. They then become immobile. All in all, we can then say that 'ghettoisation' has taken place in Britain, though perhaps not on as great a scale as in the USA. More and more marginal workers, who suffer ethnic and gender oppression, are concentrated in the ghettos of the inner cities.

¹⁷ Henderson and Karn suggest that it was the 'attitude of whites towards living in the inner city and older parts of the middle ring which was by far the most powerful element in producing the growing segregation of West Indians and Asians in those areas' (1987: 273). They also suggest that the process of allocation of public housing operated to the disadvantage of racial minorities, women and less 'respectable' working class people.

Inadequate resources, due to their class location, ethnic and gender position, extended family, as well as the lack of welfare provision by the state, hinder geographical mobility of marginal workers.

Aneil (UK41) worked as a motor mechanic in the Fire Service. He resigned or was dismissed when the Fire Service tried to merge its three workshops into one centralised workshop in Birmingham. However, Aneil rejected relocation to Birmingham, merely because he could not afford to keep a car to commute to and fro between Birmingham and Coventry.

Aneil: 'The morning traffic condition was so congested. It took us a good 45 minutes to get there and 45 minutes to come back. And the Council was only ready to pay a bus pass. To go by bus, we had to change 3 buses and 1 train. It was not possible. To go by car was too expensive. The fuel bill, the running of the car was too expensive for me to Birmingham.'

Although Anna (UK16) was offered a permanent post as a manager in Daventry in a catalogue-sale store, she turned down the offer because she could not afford to move to Daventry in terms of financial resources, housing conditions as well as her support from her extended family.

Anna: 'I haven't got a car at the moment. It is easy to commute from Coventry but I didn't have the finances to buy a car. The house in Daventry was quite big and I owned my house in Coventry, so it was difficult for me to sell and buy. I'm very close to my family. Even though I have friends, my family comes first and being out of reach, it will affect me, because I need the family for encouragement and I need my family for back up as well. I really never lived far away from them. So I turned down the job.'

Anna's case also indicates that only a small proportion of Afro-Caribbean women is able to move out to the sub-urban areas and enjoy the

life-style of a 'middle class'. Many of them are confined by their ethnic and gender position of being a black woman as well as a single mother, who need the support from their extended families. Since most of their family members have settled down in the inner cities, they cannot move out of the inner cities if they want to get their extended family's help in childcare or chores.

Mark's (UK30) case also shows that welfare provisions, especially welfare housing, limit the mobility of welfare recipients. Mark was an ex-homeless unemployed male who finally settled down in Leicester after years of travelling around. He did not have many friends or relatives in Leicester. However, the housing provision, which enabled him to leave the ranks of homeless people, also confined him to Leicester.

Mark: 'One side of me wants to settle down, another side wants to travel. It's a little bit of a tug-of-war. I've not really tried to live in other places. I thought about it. I appreciate I got the flat. You can do what you like but you've got to settle down sometime.'

In conclusion, marginal workers are confined to the inner cities and large conurbations in Britain as a result of their lack of economic resources, lack of access to an extended family system and rigid welfare provisions.

Conclusion: A Sedimentary Class Formation

In this chapter, I have synthesised data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the General Household Survey (GHS) and the Samples of Anonymised Records (SARs) from the 1991 Census of Population in estimating the size and distribution of various categories of marginal workers. In 1991, over one-

third of the working population in the UK were marginal workers. The result supports my thesis that 'marginal is critical' as a significant number of different groups of marginal workers have constituted and still constitute an indispensable part of the labour force during the post-war accumulation of capital in Britain.

I have suggested that the formation and development of new categories of marginal workers are related to the change and decomposition of the old ones. Ethnic and gender divisions of labour are the two main sorting mechanisms of the class position of the marginal workers. The influx of black migrant workers in the 1950s and the 1960s and their concentration in manufacturing industry made most of them face redundancy in the 1970s. Redundant Asian workers started their small own businesses, which induced the rise of self-employed Asian male workers, as well as homeworking and unpaid family workers among Asian female workers in the 1970s.

Since the 1960s, employers also utilised the labour power of successive generations of married women by offering more part-time jobs in manufacturing industry and then the service industry to suit the conflicting demands of being a working mother. Thereafter, part-time female workers became a major category of female marginal workers.

In the 1980s, the long-term unemployed, most of them white manual workers in the manufacturing and construction industries, were pushed to work in the shadow economy by the tightening of unemployment benefit. They became the new source of marginal workers. The high unemployment

rate of the Caribbean male after the 1980s contributed to their 'insecure' labour market position. However, the more secure class position of Caribbean women compared to their male counterparts enabled Caribbean women to challenge male domination. Many of them decided to live as single parents. In the 1990s, many single parents, including both black and white women, found themselves trapped in the welfare system as they could not get low-cost childcare service. Many of them thus had to work as part-time and temporary workers.

All in all, these groups of marginal workers are not mutually exclusive and discrete. Many members of former groups of marginal workers become members of the latter groups. Nevertheless, the utilisation of the latter group of marginal workers does not mean an end to the utilisation of the former groups. Many old members, however, are still trapped in their low-paid and insecure jobs. This historical class formation process of marginal workers in the UK can be termed as a 'sedimentary class formation'. The sedimentary class formation in Britain is also facilitated by the marginal trap class structure and the ghettoisation of the inner cities. In the next chapter, I will introduce the historical development of marginal workers in Hong Kong.

Chapter 6

Marginal Workers in Hong Kong: A Disrupted Class Formation

In parallel with the previous chapter which discussed class formation in Britain, this chapter will focus on the historical class formation of marginal workers in Hong Kong. Firstly, I will quote statistics on different groups of marginal workers to support the fact that the post-war development of Hong Kong was only made possible by utilising successive waves of migrants and women workers, who were engaged in low-paid and insecure jobs. Enormous number of workers in Hong Kong are marginal workers, which supports my main hypothesis that 'marginal is critical'.

Secondly, I will characterise Hong Kong's historical class formation as one which has been 'disrupted' by successive inflows of 'newcomers'. The mass influx of Chinese immigrants in the 1940s, the 1960s, and the 1980s, as well as the extensive importation of Asian domestic maids and other guest workers in the 1990s, have provided a stream of a fresh labour supply for the most marginal jobs in the labour market. I will quote both quantitative statistics and qualitative evidence to examine the historical development of different sub-groups of marginal workers in Hong Kong in three periods, which are distinguished by different modes of capital accumulation: the

informal economy from the mid-1940s to the late 1950s, the flexible mode of production from the early 1960s to the mid 1980s, and the formation of a regional political economy with China from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s.

This 'disrupted' class formation of marginal workers is also a product of the 'permeable' class structure in Hong Kong in which a high upward and downward class mobility across the division between mainstream and marginal workers has induced an 'uncertain class location' among workers in Hong Kong. I will discuss this permeable class structure with the oral history data in the second part of this chapter.

In the last section of this chapter, I will compare and contrast the class formations and class structures of the marginal working classes in Britain and Hong Kong as a conclusion of Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

From the Mid-1940s to the Late 1950s: The Informal Economy

Before the Second World War, Hong Kong was an entrepôt acting as a jumping-board for mercantile capital into China. British colonial capital only set up a small 'modern' sector like the dockyards and warehouses to enable the smooth functioning of their own trading business. The setting up of a handful of public utility companies was done just to allow the privileged colonial ruling class and the Chinese elites to enjoy a modern style of living. However, the rest of society was typically 'traditional': fishing and agriculture were the main occupations of local residents, while most of the migrant

workers from China were young males from *Guangdong*, who took up casual jobs as 'coolies' in transportation or as labourers in the construction industry. Although the 'modern' sector in Hong Kong could not accommodate a large number of immigrants from China, its stable political environment provided a unique 'shelter' for millions of refugees from China who suffered from starvation, political and economic turmoil, and war.

Mass Immigration from China

Prior to 1941 Chinese people consistently treated Hong Kong as a place of refuge. Between 1945 and 1949, 1.3 million people, evading the civil war in China, flocked into Hong Kong. By the end of 1950 the population of Hong Kong had reached not much less than 2.5 million (Youngson 1983).

Some refugees, especially those from Shanghai in the late 1940s, brought with them considerable capital, experience and expertise in industrial undertakings. Several Shanghaiese capitalists set up large textile mills in Hong Kong by relocating their machinery from Shanghai, giving manufacturing industry a start in Hong Kong (Lui and Wong 1994).

However, the Shanghaiese capital and skilled workers were relatively small in number when compared to the vast influx of the Cantonese from the nearby *Guangdong* province. Most of these Cantonese were peasants without any industrial experience, who found it difficult to find jobs when they first came. Therefore, the unemployment rate in Hong Kong was as high as about 25 per cent in 1950 and 12.2 per cent in 1954 (England 1986).

The mass exodus of immigrants, together with limited employment opportunities in the 'modern' sector, generated the mushroom-like development of the 'informal' economy in the 1950s in Hong Kong. On the one hand, the informal economy provided a means of survival for the mass of unemployed immigrants; on the other hand, it also lowered the reproductive cost of labour. The continuous supply of low wage workers provided the basis for the development of manufacturing industry in Hong Kong. Yet, due to the take-off of industrialisation in the late-1950s and the end of mass immigration from China, by the end of the 1950s employers were beginning to complain of a labour shortage. The Census of 1961 recorded unemployment at a mere 1.7 per cent (England 1986).

The Informal Economy as Survival

Castells and Portes (1989) argue from a Marxist tradition that the informal economy is not a set of survival activities performed by destitute people on the margins of society; and that 'informal' is not a euphemism for poverty. According to them, the informal economy is a process of income-generation marked by an absence of institutional regulation in the work process, the status of labour, conditions of work, and forms of management.

Castells and Portes (1989) stress the importance of the interrelations between the formal and informal sectors in understanding the phenomenon. They stress that petty commodity production is of benefit to the accumulation and valorisation of capital. They also emphasise the significant role of the informal sector in lowering the reproduction costs of labour of the

modern sector. This perspective helps us to understand the continuous development of the informal economy in Hong Kong since the 1950s.

Street Hawking

After 1945 the modern sector in Hong Kong was unable to accommodate the rapidly growing migrant population. Many unemployed migrants thus became street hawkers. In 1947 the number of hawkers was estimated to be anywhere from 40,000 to 70,000 (McGee 1973: 42).

The hawkers mainly sold cooked food. Some turned raw materials into processed products. Others obtained semi-processed or fully processed food products from legal and illegal food workshops. Hawkers also sold samples, over-stock and second-graded garments and household-wares from the manufacturing factories. In essence hawkers are very popular in Hong Kong partly for the convenience they offer; and partly for the affordable prices. The cheap prices of the hawkers' products significantly lower the living costs of the working class and provide a source of social welfare for the old and the weak who work as hawkers (McGee 1973: 37-38)

The Informal Economy Worker: Kam

Kam (HK08, F/61,¹ Chinese) was born in Hong Kong in 1935. Her mother reared pigs with her grandmother. Her father was an opium addict, who did not work at all. They lived in a wooden hut on the hillside on Hong

¹ All the ages of the informants in Hong Kong were their ages in 1996, at the time of their interview.

Kong island. She was uneducated owing to the outbreak of the Japanese War. Their small pig-rearing family farm was also disrupted by the war so they moved back to Mainland China during the period when Hong Kong was under Japanese occupancy. In 1945 she returned to Hong Kong and became jobless. To earn her living, she was engaged in the informal economy by first working as a hawker to sell fish, and then collecting 'sau shui' to rear pigs.

The Illegal Hawker

Kam: 'We sold fish in front of our home, which was on the ground floor. I was responsible for weighing the fish and wrapping. We only earned enough to be able to buy food. However, the income from selling fish also provided us with the money to buy a pig, and we reared a pig again inside our home.'

As the informal economy was not really unregulated and ignored by the state, Kam and her family faced prosecutions and the control by the state for being an illegal hawker. They had to obtain a hawker's license to sell food. However, they were then prohibited from selling fish.

Control by the State

Kam: 'Someone complained to the police about us and we were caught by the police. When we sold fish, we needed to "chau gwei"³ because we were selling on the street. We didn't have a stall. Then we stopped selling fish and changed to selling fruit. We got a license and then we erected a small stall to sell fruit.'

² Sau shui (嫂水) or "bad smell water", is really a mixture of discarded food items, like fishes, meat, vegetables, rice and soup or water. Chinese farmers, especially those working in small size farms, usually fed their pigs with this collection of discarded food.

³ "Chau gwei" (走鬼) means running away from 'ghost' – running away from the police/state authority. In Hong Kong, *gwei lo* (the ghost) means foreigners, who occupied the chief positions in the police especially in colonial days.

Contrary to the suggestion of Portes et al. (1989) that the state really does not 'regulate' the informal economy, the state of Hong Kong in fact consciously allowed its informal economy to survive to provide a means of living for marginal workers. However, when the 'modern sector', or more precisely capital accumulation, needed to 'develop', the state did not hesitate in swiping the informal economy away. The government again prohibited Kam's family from selling fruits, when the land was designated for development.

Kam: 'We sold fruit for two to three years. We could only make a bit money, but not much. Then the business went down. We had to move because we were asked to move. We were no longer allowed to sell fruit at the first spot, since the government needed the land for development.'

Her mother had begun to rear pigs on the hillside again so Kam stopped selling fruit and began to help her mother rearing pigs.

Kam: 'Someone complained about us and we were forbidden to rear pigs inside our home. Therefore we started to rear pigs on the hillside again. We were squatters and occupied the land illegally. No one bothered you.'

Self-exploitation in the Informal Economy

Rearing pigs on the hillside was labour intensive work and Kam and her mother had to work hard from morning till night. It was definitely self-exploitative.

Kam: 'We went to the market to pick some rotten vegetables or buy some in the early morning. I was also responsible for collecting "sau shui". It's just the same as collecting rubbish. I carried them up the hill with a bamboo. They were heavy. Everyday, I needed to carry two to three big baskets of vegetables and more than ten buckets of "sau shui". I went up the hill three to four times a day.'

As they worked very hard, they could earn about a hundred HKD for each pig after rearing it for half a year. When they got some more money, they reared some more pigs. They also reared a mother-pig for nurturing piglets. At the peak of their business, they were rearing about forty pigs. Kam's family stopped rearing pigs only because the government prohibited them from doing so in 1965. The government tore down their stalls to reclaim the land for estate development.

The existence of 'pig rearing' on the hill-slopes in urban areas in such a densely populated city as Hong Kong may sound crazy and impossible. It was, however, the existence of such an informal economy in the 1950s, which provided the means of survival for hundreds of thousands of families like Kam's. Furthermore the informal economy created a cheap supply of food and goods, in this case pork, which lowered the reproduction costs of labour. While Kam and her mother relied on the informal economy – a traditional sector in agriculture in rearing pigs – to maintain their survival, other women workers returned to traditional jobs by working as housemaids in post-war Hong Kong.

The Chinese Spinster Maid: Eight

In Britain black Caribbean women intentionally chose to become single mothers as a way of protesting against their gender oppression. In Hong Kong and China, we can find a similar kind of resistance to gender oppression from the experience of *Mar Jie* (媽姐), the spinster maids, who, like the black women in Britain, were confined to the class position of a marginal worker. Many of these spinster maids had worked previously as silk weavers in *Shunde*, a county in *Guangdong* Province.

Salaff (1981) argues that the young *Shunde* weavers exchanged vows of celibacy with one another and formed a Buddhist-inspired residential 'sisterhood'. These workers exercised a certain working-class militancy, and when their wage demands were not met by management they conducted strikes. Moreover, their advantageous class position as waged workers enabled them to challenge gender domination (Howard and Buswell 1925; Smedley 1978; Topley 1975).

It Is My Own Choice

Eight (HK11, F/81, Chinese) was a spinster maid born in *Shunde* in 1914. At the age of 18, Eight became a silk weaver. Although the work was really hard, the wage earned made these girls think differently. This particular early factory experience gave them the necessary economic independence to resist the patriarchal society. They decided to be spinsters. Echoing the Caribbean women in Britain who were determined to be single mothers,

these young Chinese women chose to have 'their hair combed up': a Chinese custom which symbolises their determination to be single women who will not marry in their lifetime. Their experiences of being waged labour empowered them to ask for more 'freedom' from the traditional family.

Eight: 'We decided not to get married when we were teenagers. When I was weaving in the factory... You know, I was able to earn some money. It was really good. I could earn fourteen to fifteen dollars a month. At that time, it was a really good sum. There was no need to be bound. I did not want to be bound.'

Social Exclusion from the Extended Family

Unlike the Caribbean women who got valuable support from their extended family after they had chosen to be single mothers, the non-conforming Chinese spinsters always faced social exclusion from the patriarchal family system. Eight resisted an arranged marriage by running away with her sister and both of them became spinsters in the neighbouring village. Eight was then excluded from the extended family. It is a traditional belief that spinsters will bring bad luck to their family if they return home. Eight never returned to her previous 'home' again.

Eight: 'My elder brother and his family lived in our home. When we passed by the door, they asked us to go in, but we did not enter. Yes, that's me. I did not enter the house...I did not want to become the scapegoat, did not want to be an excuse.'

Eight's factory life was first disrupted by the Japanese War and then the civil war. In 1949 she migrated to Hong Kong and worked in a factory weaving quilts. However after the embargo due to the Korean War, the factory received no orders. Eight was then made redundant. Eight's

experiences demonstrate how different imperialist wars disrupted the class formation process of the first generation of women into a working class as well as the primary accumulation of indigenous capital in Hong Kong, as well as southern China.

Eight had to find another job in order to survive. She ended her factory worker's life and became a maid. However, it was against her wishes.

Eight: 'You know, actually, by weaving quilt, I could earn quite a lot. It was really good. But we had nothing to weave, then I changed to be a maid. You know, I hated being a maid. Too many jobs to be done. It's arduous. Bound by it.'

The Chinese spinsters, like the Caribbean women in Britain, were determined to be single and fight against gender domination. The Chinese spinsters wished to be free, 'not to be bound', so it was natural that they preferred working in factories or restaurants to working as a maid. However, they could no longer work in the factories or restaurants because of abrupt changes in the socio-economic structure: the disruption of wars, the trade embargo and changes in the labour process. The spinsters finally realised that they could only survive by working as maids and found themselves trapped in a marginal worker's position.

The high concentration of Chinese spinsters in domestic service occupations shows how their gender position works as a sorting mechanism of their class position. The spinsters are females, who do not have the household responsibilities of married women. Their labour power is thus more 'free' than other married women. Moreover, being social excluded by

their original families, the spinsters have to find a job with lodgings provided by the employers to reduce their living expenses. Therefore, they are more likely to work as a maid than married women.

Support from 'Sisters'

Although the maids were excluded by their family and mainstream Chinese society, they received invaluable help from their fellow 'sisters'. They formed informal support networks to exchange information about jobs and bosses; to buy a house together to use when they were unemployed or retired; and to care for each other when one was sick or ill. The social exclusion induced a strong cohesion and intimate 'sisterhood' among the spinsters. This 'sisterhood', a strong social bonding among working 'sisters', has been inherited by successive generations of working women in Hong Kong.

Eight: 'We are good sisters. When there were better jobs, we would recommend them to each other. We four sisters bought this flat so that we could have a shelter if we were fired or on vacation, and we also prepared for our retirement.'

The Subordinated Position of Maids

The spinsters intended to be single because they did not want to be bound by a man, a family and housework. It is paradoxical that the spinster maids are actually bound by their bosses (not only the male but also the female heads), in a house (not even a home) and by more housework. Chinese spinsters are in reality more subordinated in their class position than other women who work in factories and shops.

For Chinese spinsters, the price they paid for resisting gender domination may be great, however their sisterhood and mutual caring for each other provided a 'shelter' for them to face day-to-day oppression and exploitation. During my interviews with them, I still felt the joy and pleasure of their lives, and their obvious lack of regret for having taken the decision to be a spinster.

The Female Manufacturing Worker: Hei

We have just seen the work history of Eight, one of the millions of first generation migrants in Hong Kong in the late 1940s, whose work history was disrupted by wars. Eight never went back to the factory floor, which she really missed. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the economic basis of Hong Kong was re-export trade, which provided limited job opportunities for women workers. Only after the Korean War did export-orientated manufacturing take off in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Since then, manufacturing industries have extensively incorporated hundreds of thousands of women as factory workers in Hong Kong. Hei was one of those first generation of women workers, who were engaged in manufacturing industry in Hong Kong.

The Patriarchal Father

Hei (HK04, F/78, Chinese) was born in 1917 in *Guangdong* province. Her father was a silk-weaver while her mother nurtured silkworms. She had one younger brother and one younger sister. They were so poor that Hei's

parents sold her sister for fifty dollars to pay debts and the school fees of her brother.

At the age of ten, she worked as a child labourer by weaving silk at her home village. Both Hei and Hei's father got their own wages. However, Hei's father did not support the family. He did not care about the family and spent his entire wage drinking, gambling and eating. With such a father, she and her mother led a very hard life. She then worked as a maid, when she took refuge in a relative's home in *Guangzhou*. Hei's working life was also disrupted by the Japanese War.

First Generation Women Manufacturing Workers

After the end of the Japanese War, Hei settled down in Hong Kong with her husband and her eldest daughter. Hei's husband suffered from a long-term illness, and was often out of work. At that time Hei could not work since she had just had a second child and there were really not many job vacancies for women workers. However, when she got pregnant for the third time, the growth of manufacturing industries in Hong Kong and the acute financial needs of the family, made her start working as a factory worker.

Hei: 'Though I was pregnant, I went to work in a workshop. It was a metalware workshop. I worked there making the legs of chairs and tables. This was the first time I had formally worked in a factory.'

Hei stopped working in factories when her third child, a daughter was born. She then worked in the informal economy ironing clothes for neighbours. She started working in factories again when her third child was

about six to seven years old. The ironing skills she learned in the informal sector could easily be transferred into the formal sector. She ironed woollen clothes in a factory.

Poor Occupational Health

Hei, however, like many other women workers working in the newly begun manufacturing factories in Hong Kong, which were notorious for their bad working conditions, got an occupational illness. Due to the 'steam' gas used while she ironed the woollen clothes, she got asthma. Hei, 'I was sick. I got various illnesses. I was always coughing. I coughed and coughed'. Hei then changed to being a packing worker in various garment factories. Her pay was so low that she had to supplement her income by outworking, that is taking work from the factory to finish at home, and asking her daughters to help.

Hei: 'My eldest daughter sometimes had to work with me until one or two in the morning. It was piece-rate and the pay was very low. All the transportation and other costs were borne by me. I earned less than if I worked in the factories. However, I wanted to get the jobs and to earn some more.'

As she was the first generation of manufacturing women workers, Hei did not change jobs very often owing to her older age. For 35 years she had only worked as an unskilled labourer for three different garment factories. She retired at the age of 75 in 1990.

The stories of Kam, Eight and Hei show that the first generation of women workers in Hong Kong in the post-war period had to maintain their existence by working extremely hard in the 'old' informal economy and domestic service, as well as the 'new' manufacturing industry in the 1950s.

Moreover, the Japanese War, the Civil War in China and the Korean War disrupted the working life of these first generation women workers and their male counterparts. It is also paradoxical that the post-war working class formation process in Hong Kong started with the disrupted interference of the trade embargo on China by the USA in the Korean War, which forced Hong Kong to start its export-oriented manufacturing and to become a part of the world capitalist system.

Male Casual Workers

In the 1950s the existence of a vast reserve army of labour meant that there was little or no security of employment. England (1986) reports that workers who were more diligent, loyal and dependable, or who possessed special skills could have the status of a long-term permanent worker, a *chang gong* (長工). Most of the workers, however, were *san gong* (散工) (casual workers) who occupied a more inferior status and were hired and fired according to the will of the employers. Casual workers were undoubtedly the major category of marginal workers in Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1961, according to the Census, there were 1,190,937 persons engaged in some forms of employment, of whom 137,318 were casual or seasonal workers. In other words, about one in nine (11.5%) of the working population was a casual or seasonal worker.

I have just introduced the life stories of first generation women workers in Hong Kong. Now I turn my focus to the first generation of male

casual workers. The majority of the male casual workers arrived at Hong Kong in the late 1940s. They worked mainly as casual workers in retail, transport, storage and the catering trade in the 1950s. Many of them became manual labourers in manufacturing industry in the 1960s, and eventually became labourers in the construction industry in the 1970s. Some of them were engaged in the informal economy and became self-employed in order to survive. Ong was one of these self-employed male workers, whose uncertain class location is my focus of analysis.

The Self-employed: Ong

Ong (HK07, M/66, Chinese) was born in China in 1929. He migrated to Hong Kong in 1948, when he was 19 years old. Though Ong was unemployed for over half a year, he sometimes worked as a casual worker.

Ong: 'I got nothing to do. I could not find a job. It lasted for about half a year. But sometimes I worked as a casual labourer. People asked me to carry mud. Three and a half dollars a day. It was not enough for food and lodging. At least I got something to eat. I thought, it's okay for me to suffer for a period of time.'

He then worked as an apprentice in a western style restaurant. The work of an apprentice was arduous and low-skilled.

Ong: 'I was learning to be a cook. But it's arduous being a cook. I started work at eight in the morning and finished work at two the following morning. We were doing all the miscellaneous tasks.'

Ong was promoted to cook after four to five years. Like many workers in Hong Kong, who tried to grasp every opportunity to earn more money and advance their status by moving around different enterprises, Ong

quit and became a first cook in another restaurant. He received a significant increase in his wage as well as authority.

Ong: 'I got a pay rise. I got about two hundred dollars. At that time, two hundred dollars was a big sum. I was doing a more important post. I could recruit people too.'

Workers in Hong Kong easily move up and down the occupational ladder. Ong only worked as the first cook in that restaurant for one year. Afterwards he worked as second cook in another restaurant.

Ong: 'There were less customers, so the boss began to complain...the cook was not good, the food was not all right etc. He was unhappy. We were unhappy. As I was unhappy I preferred to go away on my own. Then I quit. I started from the very beginning. I did not work as first cook, I became second cook in another restaurant.'

Having been downgraded from first cook to second cook, Ong not only got a reduction in salary, but also reflected on his working life. He felt it was meaningless as 'the other one was the master'.

Ong got married at the age of 24. He and his wife lived at Shek Kip Mei in a wooden hut on the hillside. After the big fire in the squatters area in Shek Kip Mei on Christmas Eve 1953, the government erected blocks of 'resettlement estates', the first public rental housing schemes, to accommodate the fire victims. Ong and his wife were among those, who were 'resettled' to Tang Hang Tung Estate. Ong then decided to work as a knitting worker in the wool-knitting industry.

Ong: 'I started to knit wool wear. It was prosperous at that time. I worked as an apprentice, and for that I had to pay five hundred dollars. But then after two weeks, I finished training and began to work as a worker. What I earned was less than that when I was in the restaurant.'

Being One's Own Boss: The Outworker

Ong did not aim at just working as an ordinary knitting employee, but at 'being his own boss'. He bought two new knitting machines and taught his wife to knit. Both of them became outworkers.⁴

Ong: 'I brought two knitting machines home. We put them in our flat at Tai Hang Tung. We, I and my wife, knitted at home. I went to the store of the big factories to get orders. We did not hire anyone.'

However, working as one's own boss one may be even more exploited than as waged labour. Although Ong and his wife worked day and night and even with the help from their young children, their income was just enough for food and lodging.

Ong: 'I got up at six or seven and worked until one or two in the morning. I worked in this way. I worked like this every day. I taught my two children to knit too. They had to help us to work though they were still young. My eldest son was in the fourth year of primary school. We worked so hard in this way. It was really arduous. You knitted one piece, then you got money for one piece.'

Ong received orders from various factories because they could not get enough jobs to do by only working for one single factory. However, he

⁴ Outwork, *wai fa gong* (外發工) in Chinese, means out-processing work which is finished by workers outside the premises of the employers. Most outworkers perform their work at their homes, while some of them process the tasks in public spaces like parks or corridors in public housing estates. Therefore, the outworkers in Hong Kong mainly refer to the same group as homeworkers in Britain. Nevertheless, in order to refer to the particular local context of the two regions, the term 'outworker' and 'homeworker' are used in the context of Hong Kong and Britain respectively.

stopped working as a knitting outworker after three to four years when he could not get any orders. He was forced to sell the knitting machines for food and lodging. Despite the self-exploitative nature of becoming one's own boss, Ong was still keen to be self-employed. He began to work as a street hawker by selling preserved fruits like preserved pineapples, dried lemon, preserved plums. However, this downward mobile career made Ong feel uneasy and he felt he was 'losing face'.

A 'Face Losing' Act: Working as a Street Hawker

Ong: 'At first I did not dare to sell on the street. It's shameful. It was because I had been first cook, but now I was selling preserved fruits on the street. I did not want to let people recognise me. I thought it was losing face.'

Ong then got used to being a hawker firstly selling preserved fruits and then ice-creams. The business of selling ice-cream was so good that they could afford to rent a small shop in the Tang Hang Yung Estate selling noodles. Ong and his wife then worked as hawkers selling cooked noodles for the following fifteen years. Ong's experience of changing jobs in different industries, together with hopping between the status of an employee and the self-employed is a typical career path for many other unskilled male workers who started working in the 1950s. They experienced both upward and downward mobility in their career. This constant movement between being a proletarian and a petty-bourgeois made their class location uncertain.

Ong came to Hong Kong in the late 1940s. He could support his own family by working as a hawker, which was allowed by the government in the

1950s and early 1960s. He could even save some money to open his small business. He was fortunate. It represents a happy ending for many casual workers who entered Hong Kong in the late 1940s. Bill, a casual worker who came later in the 1960s, had an unfortunate story to tell.

The Street Sleeper: Bill

Wanchai district on Hong Kong island is an old urban area interspersed by piecemeal office block developments. I interviewed Bill, a long-term unemployed male, under a busy flyover in Wanchai district. Within a few hundred metres there were numerous high-rise skyscrapers that signified the prosperity of Hong Kong. Under the flyover, it was hot, noisy and full of waste fumes from the motor vehicles. I found it was difficult for me to stay in that environment for an afternoon. Bill, however, had been living and sleeping there for more than 18 years since 1978.

Bill (HK26, M/64, Chinese), born in 1932 in China, was illiterate when he migrated to Hong Kong in 1960. He worked as an agricultural worker at a farm and then worked as a porter and labourer in different shops. He then became a construction labourer. He got Pneumoconiosis when he was breaking the stones without a mask. He knew nothing about Pneumoconiosis, which was a common occupational illness of Hong Kong masons who inhaled the stone-dust.

At the time of my interview with Bill in 1996 he had been sleeping on the streets since 1978. His wish to keep his job as a construction worker made him become a street-sleeper.

Bill: 'At that time, I needed to store the equipment like the big hammer and the iron bar for my work. However, the bed-sit I lived in was so tiny that I didn't have room to store them. Therefore, I slept on the street.'

Survival Strategy: Income from the Informal Economy

His deteriorating health prevented him from working as a construction worker any longer. He then became a cardboard picker. He walked around the streets after the shops had closed and collected the cardboards on his cart until ten. Bill said, 'Usually I could collect a hundred catties⁵ of paper and I could earn about forty to fifty dollars a day.' However, because more people engaged in the trade of collecting cardboards, his earnings decreased. In 1994 Bill discovered that he had tuberculosis. He had to go to the clinic everyday to take medicine.

When Bill first slept under the flyover, it was just him who slept alone there. By the time of the interview, there were fifteen to sixteen street sleepers living under the flyover. Bill claimed that about ten of them were drug addicts with only six of them, including himself, free from drugs. Some of their beds were just two to three feet under the bottom of the flyover. At the date of interview, I saw an empty bed with some oranges and dumplings in front of it. The owner of that bed had just died the week before our interview.

⁵ Catty (斤) is a unit of measurement of weight in traditional Chinese society. It is commonly used in Hong Kong. One catty equals to about 1.3 lb.

Looking at the empty bed, I was worried that it would be Bill's final destination.

Bill's story is typical for many male casual workers, who worked in the construction industry in the early 1960s and who experienced a downward mobile career. Many of them stayed in low-skilled jobs in the construction trade and became long-term unemployed middle aged and old aged workers in the 1980s and 1990s.

While immigrants from China in the 1950s worked mainly as casual workers and informal economy workers to survive, the major group of marginal workers were the flexible women workers, who worked as inworkers as well as outworkers and sub-contractors in manufacturing industry.

The 1960s to 1970s: Workers in Manufacturing

Small Establishments of Manufacturing Industry

Hong Kong's economic restructuring from entrepôt trade to manufacturing industry after the Korean War embargo was rapid and smooth. Manufacturing industry in Hong Kong developed so rapidly that by 1961 it accounted for 24.7 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 43 per cent of total employment. Between 1961 and 1971, the number of manufacturing establishments more than tripled from 5,980 to 17,865 and the

number of manufacturing workers increased from 229,857 to 593,494 (Commissioner for Labour 1962, 1972).

In 1950, the average number of people engaged in manufacturing establishments was 55 per establishment, but it decreased to 33 in 1970. The domination of small establishments in manufacturing industry, as well as the continuous decrease in size of the establishments, signify the growth of small workshops and the importance of sub-contracting relationship within the industry. Manufacturing factories in Hong Kong are predominantly small enterprises. In 1971, 62.7 per cent of manufacturing factories were small establishments that employed between one and nine people. About one in three (33.5%) manufacturing workers worked in establishments with less than 50 employees. The dominance of small establishments in manufacturing industry brought about poor working conditions, low job security and a high labour turnover.⁶ Women workers in the small establishments of the manufacturing industry were usually engaged in some forms of marginal work such as outworking, sub-contracting or unpaid family work.

⁶ For the persistence of informal economy in small manufacturing enterprises, see Cheng and Gereffi (1994).

Table 6.1: Number of Persons Engaged in Manufacturing Industry by Activity Status and by Sex, Hong Kong, 1976 By-census.

Activity Status	Male	Female	Total
Self-employed	17,780	3,230	21,010
Employer	15,470	1,020	16,490
Outworker	14,160	48,320	62,480
Employee	376,930	308,310	685,240
Unpaid family worker	3,030	6,070	9,100
On leave	8,610	5,740	14,350
Unemployed	14,090	7,300	21,390
Summer student worker	17,290	19,960	37,250
Total	467,360	399,950	867,310

Source: Census and Statistics Department (1982) Hong Kong Annual Digest 1981, Table 3.9, p.41.

According to the 1976 By-census, women working in manufacturing industry were less likely to be either self-employed or an employer than men, and more likely to be an outworker or unpaid family worker. Among 399,950 women workers in manufacturing industry, 3,230 (0.8%) were self-employed compared with 17,780 (3.8%) of male manufacturing workers; and 1,020 women were an employer compared with 15,470 men. In contrast, 48,320 (12.1%) female manufacturing workers were outworkers, while only 14,160 (3.0%) male manufacturing workers were outworkers (Table 6.1).

Subcontractors

England (1986) argues that the consequence of the growing shortage of skilled workers in the late 1950s was an increase in internal contracting within the manufacturing sector. It became an important means whereby fast-growing industries, such as garments or plastics, could bring in specialist skills

at particular points in the production process. A group of workers, contracted to supply the service when required, enabled the firms to compensate for the lack of skills among their direct employees or to deal with a sudden surge of work. Subcontracting activities thus increased the flexibility of manufacturing industry.

One of the aims of the employers was to acquire a flexibility in labour supply and an increase in production capacity. Therefore, more work was sub-contracted out and the small-firm sector grew rapidly. For instance, the number of establishments with under 50 workers grew from 7,830 in 1967 to 34,632 in 1977. Subcontracting also enabled firms to meet product-market fluctuations and rush orders whilst saving on direct labour and overhead costs (Sit and Ng 1980; Sit 1985).

The passing of the Employment Ordinance in 1968 gave these strategies an added advantage as employers realised that they could evade the obligations placed upon them in dealing with direct employees. It sounded like an attractive strategy as those subcontractors retained the status of being self-employed but the Employment Ordinance does not protect the self-employed (Lui 1994).

In Hong Kong there are a number of tiers of subcontracting activity in manufacturing production. In the case of garment making, the tiers include internal contracting (mainly for cutting, buttoning, and ironing), capacity subcontracting (from finishing an entire garment to the handling of some processes of assembly), part-time work (for assembly) and homeworking

(mainly for assembly) (Lui 1994). Many manufacturers have chosen a group of reliable contractors, subcontractors and outworkers to handle production on a regular basis.

Outworkers

The Commissioner of Labour noted in the Annual Report of the Labour Department of the year 1953-54 that

A large section of industrial workers, about whom it is as yet impracticable to obtain statistics, is formed by outworkers, the majority of whom are women... Many outworkers are such from choice, but some, particularly women, have some responsibilities such as children, aged persons, or invalids to be taken care of and outwork is the only way in which a living can be made.

(1953-1954: 13)

Most of the above description was still valid for the situation in the 1960s and the 1970s. However, during that period outwork was not only performed by housewives who were bound by their home duties. Many in-house manufacturing women workers also brought back work from the factory they worked in during the daytime and finished them at home at night to supplement their low incomes. The history of Hei (HK04), one of the first generation of working women, clearly supported that observation.

The 1981 Census estimates that there were 55,688 outworkers, constituting 2.4 per cent of the working population, out of whom 44,677 were women, comprising 5.4 per cent of all females in the working population. In 1981, 9.1 per cent of the female workforce in manufacturing industry were outworkers. In 1986, the number of female outworkers was

42,637, 4.3 per cent of the female working population. In short, female outworkers were an indispensable source of workers for manufacturing industry in Hong Kong.

Flexible Manufacturing Women Workers

In this section, I will introduce the life stories of the second generation of women workers in Hong Kong. They were born in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Some of them grew up in Hong Kong, while some emigrated to Hong Kong in the 1960s.

Most of them started working on the factory floor in their teens. Most of them were piece-rate workers in small factories and had very high mobility between these small factories in search of better wages or better working relationships. Many of them worked simultaneously as outworkers and inworkers in the same factory. Moreover, many of these women workers still engaged in outwork after marriage. Outworkers thus became an extra workforce for the factory when there was a rush of orders. Some of them also became sub-contractors or small entrepreneurs. Their frequent changes in jobs are testimony to the flexibility of manufacturing industry in Hong Kong. Their high adaptability and flexibility, which are indeed largely the key to the success of Hong Kong's export orientated manufacturing, are a combined product of their subordinated gender and class position.

Working Daughters

Missing Education: Gender Difference in the Family

Sau (HK03, F/48, Chinese) was Hei's eldest daughter. Sau was born in 1946. With better opportunities than her mother, Sau could study in a primary school run by a trade union. This showed progress in life chances for the second generation of women workers. At 14 Sau had completed her primary education. Though Sau was good at her studies, as the eldest daughter she held herself responsible for helping her parents to rear her family (including her younger brother and sister). It is this gender position as the elder daughter that induced her consciousness of sacrifice for the family.

Sau: 'At that time, actually I could go to school. I was considering the shortage of money. My younger sister was just born, thus the family expenditure increased. My Papa could not afford my studies. Because there was no subsidy from the government, we had to pay the full school fee.'

Sau believed that her parents were not discriminating against her gender. Sau was urged to go to work as early as possible and voluntarily let her brother have the opportunity to study. To some extent, she chose to sacrifice herself for the sake of the whole family.

The First Step into the Factory

Most women workers were introduced to the factories by relatives, neighbours, or friends who were working there. This informal 'sisterhood' network provided the necessary entry point for them. Some of the girls were

able to receive formal training and went through the whole production process in a large factory. Sau was one of these lucky girls. She entered Perfect, a large plastics factory producing first plastic sandals and flowers, and then toys and dolls. Sau was placed in a special group, which utilised the dexterity and energy of the young women.

Sau then worked in the newly set up doll department. She learned to stitch hair on a doll's head, and then hand-paint the eyebrows, lips, and eyes, etc. As she had learnt nearly all the steps, she had the confidence and skills to become an informal leader to teach her fellow 'sisters'.

Working Mothers

Most of these working women in the manufacturing industries continued their working life after their marriage. Although their wages were generally lower than those of their husbands, their incomes were still a substantial part to support the whole family. However, the traditional gender role of married women in caring for children, was the main obstacle in the working lives of these working mothers. Some of them could ask their relatives to look after their children, while some of them stopped working in the factory after their children were born. The latter ones, however, did not completely stop working, as many of them would continue working as outworkers at their own homes. Outworking at home solves both the childcare problem and the financial needs of the family.

⁷ Details about the definition of sisterhood and its impact on women manufacturing workers can be found in Chapter 7.

The Outworker

Sau worked as an outworker as early as the age of 16 when she was working at Perfect. Sau worked both as an in-house worker and as an outworker simultaneously. She assembled plastic flowers at home while stitching doll's hair in the factory. Sau stated that it was her rising status in the factory that enabled her to get the easy out-working jobs. She usually worked at home until eleven or twelve o'clock at night with the help of her mother. The pay was good since she could select the easy work. In 1962, Sau could earn as much as ten dollars a night, while she could gain only three to four dollars in the daytime.

In 1974, Hong Kong was hit badly by a recession and the income of Sau's taxi driver husband was not enough for the family. Sau was taking care of her three children at that time, so she started working as an outworker at home. The outworking labour process was well fitted to her conflicting roles of being a woman taking care of her family and being a worker to earn a living for her and her family.

She successively worked as an outworker sewing doll's dresses, handbags, and garments at home. However, Sau repeatedly found that the production lines of these products were moved back into Mainland China and that she could not find any outwork to do.

Moreover, Sau's husband, a taxi-driver, was facing the threat of unemployment. His boss decided to sell the car. He might be unemployed, but it would be quite difficult for him to find another job. Therefore, he

bought his boss's taxi. He was faced with monthly repayments on the car. At the same time, Sau was worried that the income from outworking would become unstable, so she worked in the factory again to procure a more stable income. Sau began by working in the handbag factory that she used to work in as an outworker. After the factory moved back to China, Sau worked as a sewer in various garment-making factories.

I have mentioned how Sau hopped around the toy and garment-making industries as an inworker and outworker, and sometimes simultaneously as both of them. By being a 'flexible worker', Sau maintained her skills in sewing different products: doll's hair, handbags, doll's dresses, and garments. Most of the changes between the positions of being an inworker and an outworker were a combined result of two forces: firstly, the conflicting roles of a woman worker to take care of the family and to work, and secondly, the rise and fall of manufacturing industries due to the changing international division of labour. Flexible workers try their best to satisfy the conflicting roles of a working woman and at the same time adapt to the successive changes in the labour process and production.

These flexible women workers constituted the majority of marginal workers in the 1960s. However, illegal young male immigrants from China, who flocked into Hong Kong in the late 1970s, became the 'newcomers' and substituted for the subordinated role of the flexible women manufacturing workers.

Illegal Immigrants from China

In the single year of 1974 more than 27,000 illegal immigrants entered Hong Kong. The Hong Kong government was alarmed by the influx of such a great number of immigrants and the consequential impact on the demand for social services. Therefore, the Hong Kong government introduced a 'touch-base' policy, which was based on the fact that the government could send back all illegal immigrants arrested anywhere in Hong Kong before they reached the urban area. For a few years this policy reduced the number of illegal immigrants who had evaded arrest and remained in Hong Kong. In 1978, however, the figure for illegal immigrants who successfully 'touched-base' suddenly rose to just under 30,000, and in 1979 it increased sharply to 197,600, and in the first ten months of 1980 it stood at about 150,000.

In 1980, the Hong Kong government abandoned the 'touch-base' policy so that illegal immigrants were to be repatriated to China, wherever and whenever they were found.⁸ For the five years 1976 to 1981, immigrants from China, legal and illegal, added about 480,000 people, or over 10 per cent of the total population at the beginning of 1976.

⁸ New legislation was passed on 23 October, 1980 to provide for the repatriation of all immigrants entering Hong Kong from China illegally after 23 October, 1980. Previously, 'touch-base' illegal immigrants who evaded arrest were allowed to stay.

Table 6.2: Percentage Distribution of Employed Local Population and Migrant Population by Occupation, Hong Kong 1981 Census.

Occupation	1981	1976-1980*
	Overall Total	Local Population Migrant population
	(%)	(%)
Professional, technical and related workers	6.0	2.3
Administrative and managerial workers	2.7	0.6
Clerical and related workers	12.2	3.2
Sales workers	10.3	5.5
Service workers	15.6	13.2
Production and related workers, transport equipment operators and labourers	50.4	73.9
Agricultural workers and fisherfolk	2.1	0.8
Others	0.7	0.5

*Including those migrants who entered Hong Kong during Jan.- Mar., 1981.

Source: Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong 1981 Census Main Report Vol.1 Analysis, Table 7.8, p.78.

The influx of illegal immigrants in the late 1970s was predominantly young and male. About 76 per cent of the illegal immigrants were male, of whom 90 per cent were in the age group 15 to 34. In addition, the unemployment rate of immigrants was 3.4 per cent, which was significantly lower than the 4.0 per cent of the local population. It may be due to the fact that immigrants are more willing to take up jobs requiring lower levels of skill than local workers (Census and Statistics Department 1982).

Table 6.2 illustrates that 73.9 per cent of new immigrants were production and related workers, transport equipment operators and labourers, a percentage much higher than the 48.4 per cent of the local population. It is

obvious that new immigrants were concentrated in manual unskilled occupations.

About six out of ten migrants (57%) worked in manufacturing industry with the rest equally distributed in construction, the wholesale and retail trade, and the restaurants and hotel industry. Migrants were more likely to become employees than the local population. Eight out of ten (79.6%) of the migrant population over the age of 15 were employees, compared with 55 per cent of the local population. Only 1.8 per cent of the migrants were self-employed, compared with 4.1 per cent of the local population. Nevertheless, after they had settled down in Hong Kong and gained initial capital from their employment in manufacturing industry, some new immigrants became street-hawkers and self-employed.

In the 1981 Census 63,000 people were identified as hawkers, of whom close to 40,000 were unlicensed illegal hawkers. Most newcomers doing street hawking in the 1980s were recent new immigrants who had lived in Hong Kong for ten years or less. While 57.2 per cent of the total population were born in Hong Kong, only 1.8 per cent of the street hawkers were born locally in the 1981 Census.

These immigrants from the nearby *Guangdong* province helped to keep wages down and labour ill-organised in Hong Kong. They also retarded the introduction of more capital-intensive labour processes to make higher-quality goods (Youngson 1983).

The New Immigrant Male: Wong

Most of the illegal immigrants were young men of peasant background. Like the Asians in Britain in the 1970s, these Chinese immigrant males in the late 1970s provided an abundant supply of unskilled labour to manufacturing industry and the construction industry. Both the Asians in Britain and Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong faced the impact of the restructuring of the economy, with deindustrialisation making them redundant from manufacturing industry and facing unemployment. While Asian males in Britain were more likely to become self-employed to start their family business, the new Chinese immigrant males were also more likely to become street hawkers in Hong Kong. However, the racial difference between the local and new Chinese immigrants is not as great as that between Asians and white people. It is because the immigrant and local Chinese share similar appearances, culture and religion. They can only be differentiated by their dialects and accents. Nevertheless, Chinese new immigrant males in Hong Kong occupy a similar ethnic position to that of the Irish in Britain. Both the Chinese new immigrants and the Irish provide the major sources of unskilled labour in the construction industry.

A Permeable Class Structure

Wong's (HK38, M/42, Chinese new immigrant) career history was typical of the new Chinese male immigrants, who entered Hong Kong in the late 1970s. Just like the first generation of Chinese male immigrants who came to Hong Kong in the 1950s, they also experienced a high vertical class

mobility as they constantly changed their economic status from small employer, to self-employed and employee. This created a 'permeable' class structure among these male Chinese new immigrants.

Wong came to Hong Kong in 1978 in his early twenties. He first worked as an unskilled worker in various manufacturing factories. After he got married in 1986, he started a subcontracting workshop doing silk-screen printing for the surfaces of electronic watches, and thus became a small employer. During the golden days of the electronic industry, Wong employed more than twenty workers and his wife also had to help him full-time. Nevertheless, as the electronic industry faced a recession after several years of boom, Wong could not get enough orders, so they had to close their workshop.

Wong then became a street hawker selling garments at the 'dawn market' in Shamshuipo. Afraid of being arrested by the hawker control unit of the Urban Services Department, he started hawking as early as seven in the morning and stopped before eight. At first, business was good thanks to the bulk purchases by customers from Taiwan and China. However as the price of the garments rose and customers began to be selective, his income diminished. Finally, Wong was forced to stop working as a street hawker.

Wong returned to the manufacturing industry and worked as a shop-floor worker, just as he did when he first entered Hong Kong. After their second boy was born, Wong's wife had to stay at home to take care of the children. The family was supported solely by Wong's new job as a factory

worker in a cloth-printing factory. Unfortunately, the factory moved back to China, so Wong was made redundant in 1994.

Wong: 'Restructuring again. You must continue to look for work in order to keep working. I was working in the cloth-printing factory last year. However, it moved. Less orders, less income, then you have to find another place to work. You had to think again. I had the whole family to feed.'

Wong thought that his only way out would be to become a construction worker because only the construction industry could not move back to China. Moreover, as he did not have any skills and qualifications, what he gained from an ordinary job would be just six thousand HKD per month. However, with the over-time pay in the construction industry, he might get more than ten thousand HKD per month. Therefore he became a labourer on a construction site. Unfortunately, he faced another setback due to the importation of foreign workers who worked for lower wages and replaced higher paid workers, relegating local workers to temporary jobs.

Wong: 'I often worked for one month and then I could not find long-term work. The importation of construction workers for the new airport was the main cause of that. They are cheaper, employed in bulk and easy to control.'

Wong could not find any long-term jobs, so he took whatever temporary casual jobs he could find for one or two days in order to take care of the family. It is a typical life pattern of underemployed construction workers.

Wong: 'There is no alternative. You must do whatever you can. You work in one job, and then wait for one to two months to work in another. If you got over-time pay when you worked, you could still have ten thousand HKD a month.'

The Dilemma of the Split Households

The sex ratio of illegal immigrants in the late 1970s was extremely unbalanced. These male immigrants found it difficult to get married in Hong Kong. In addition, their low status and low pay meant that they were less competitive on the marriage market than the local Chinese. Many unmarried immigrants, some of whom had already reached middle age, went back to Mainland China to get married with younger females in the rural areas in *Guangdong* province through arranged marriages. However, owing to the limited quotas for the entry of family members from China to Hong Kong, most of their wives and children stay behind in the Mainland. Their households are thus split into two halves, with some members in Hong Kong and the others in Mainland China. The male immigrant works in Hong Kong but travels back to visit his wife and children on weekends and during vacations.

As the quota for family entry has been gradually increased, more and more relatives of these male immigrants are allowed to come to Hong Kong. Although the male immigrants feel very happy to be reunited with their family, they worry about the livelihood of their family after the reunion. They really find themselves trapped in a dilemma.

Tong (HK23, M/55, Chinese new immigrant) came to Hong Kong in 1980. He was a deliveryman earning about 5,000 HKD per month. Due to his meagre income, he was living in a dingy bed-sit in a caged house⁹ in

⁹ Refer to footnote 4 in Chapter 2.

Shamshuipo. He got married in China with his wife and two children staying in China. Tong was afraid that with his low income he would not be able to support the family if all of them were permitted to come to Hong Kong.

Tong: 'My bed-sit is just 18 square feet. How can it accommodate four people? However, I cannot afford other accommodation. For a room in a shared flat, it would cost me about 2,000 dollars. I am in a dilemma. On the one hand, I want my family to join me, on the other hand I'm worried about how we can live.'

In the next section, I will discuss the importation of Asian domestic maids, who substitute the 'newcomer' position held by the illegal Chinese new immigrants in the 1980s. Their subordinated position as guest workers is a conscious creation of the Hong Kong government to utilise the cheap labour power of these new migrant workers of different ethnicities.

From the 1980s to the 1990s: The Importation of Domestic Maids

In Hong Kong the most prominent form of marginal workers in the 1980s and 1990s was the extensive importation of domestic maids from the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia. According to the General Household Survey (GHS), foreign domestic maids increased tremendously in the 1990s. In 1990, there were 63,300 live-in domestic maids, compared with 120,700 live-in domestic maids in 1996. In 1996, domestic maids constituted 9.6 per cent of the total female working population in Hong Kong, while 6.1 per cent of households in Hong Kong employed one or more domestic maids.

In 1996 nearly all (99.7%) live-in domestic maids were females. Most of them were rather young, for instance, 42.8 per cent were aged below 30. Another 39 per cent were between the ages of 30 and 39. The majority (70.2%) of them had received secondary or matriculation education. Some 21 per cent had received a tertiary education. In 1996, the median monthly main employment earnings of live-in domestic maids was \$3,750, which was about 40 per cent of \$9,500, the median monthly main employment earnings of all the working population in Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong government allows the importation of domestic maids from most Asian countries except China, Taiwan and Macau. The government believes that the importation of those of Chinese ethnic origin will make expatriation impossible if they overstay their visas. The easily identifiable skin colour and appearance of the Filipinos and Thais are the main factor in giving them permission for entry. There is no quota or limit on the importation of domestic maids. Every household which can demonstrate the need and the ability to afford a domestic maid can normally get permission from the immigration department. Therefore, domestic maids have increased enormously since the late 1980s, with no sign of a fall in the numbers being imported.

Legally domestic maids are only allowed to perform household tasks. However, many of them are required by their employers to work as illegal workers in shops and offices. The low wages of these foreign domestic maids make it attractive for the employers to ignore the legislation. Moreover,

many domestic maids also work as hourly-paid maids in other households, or as part-time workers in shops. Furthermore, some maids become street hawkers to sell goods to other maids on their rest days to earn more money.

The effects of the large influx of domestic maids on the local labour market are twofold. Firstly, it enables more married middle-class and professional women to participate in the labour market. Secondly, it provides an abundant supply of cheap labour for the very low-paid service jobs, both legally in domestic households and illegally in shops, restaurants and stalls. Some employers in Hong Kong, nevertheless, are not satisfied with such legal and illegal uses of foreign maids, so they continually demand the importation of more foreign guest workers to get an even cheaper labour supply and even suggest lowering the minimum wage of these maids.

The Ethnic Division of Labour by the State

The Hong Kong government has laid down a minimum wage and other provisions for minimum employment conditions for all maids. In practice, however, this 'minimum wage' is basically the maximum wage that the maids can get. The 'unfree' nature of these migrant maids makes them prone to suffer from super-exploitation (Cohen 1987).

Many domestic maids in Hong Kong suffer from super-exploitation. When they first come to Hong Kong, they are generally to be employed through an agency to which they have to pay three months' salary as a 'broker's fee'. Most of the maids cannot pay the fee in advance, so they get

into debt with the agency. This debt ties the maids into an 'unfree labour' position. If they complain to the authorities that they are maltreated by the employers, they may be sacked and repatriated. Consequently, they cannot pay the debt.

The Filipino Maid: Flora

Flora (HK 01, F/36, Filipino) was one of these Asian maids, whose actions were restricted by their economic needs and who dared not make a complaint against employers about their super-exploitation. Flora was illegally ordered by her employers to work in their food-shop. The work was arduous and she needed to wake up at 5 o'clock in the early morning.

Flora: 'They start to sell the food around six o'clock. Six, seven, eight. And then at the same time, I need to wash the bowls and everything. And then of course when they say something, I can't understand. Then how can I work? So they are very angry.'

Harassment at the Workplace

Maids may not only face psychological harassment by their employers, but also physical assaults. Flora's female boss was a Thai so they could not communicate in English. Flora frequently faced scoldings and attacks from her boss.

Flora: 'When the lady's angry with me, she punches me. When she's angry, she punches, but by that time, I know what to do. I can ask the policeman during the time she pushes me. I can ask the policeman to go and then showing him that my employers treat me like that. Actually, my job is illegal.'

Unfree Labour and the State

Flora did not complain to the authorities as she had not repaid her debt. She recalled, 'I want to finish my pay to the agency first. And then after that I don't worry even if I lose my job.'

Having paid up the fee to the agency for three months, she put forward a written complaint to the Philippines Consulate. Nevertheless, they did not believe Flora. Disappointingly, people in the Philippines Consulate informed her employers about her complaint. Flora protested that the Philippines government was not only standing on the side of the employers, but also merely thinking of making money from the business of labour exportation.

Flora: 'I'm blaming our government. Why? Why they are used to export people, especially the women? Why not the government think of something so that the Filipinos do not work abroad. I think that I'm exploited by the employer and also by the government, the Philippines government. They can get a lot, but still nothing up for the country, because they work for their own pocket.'

Asian domestic maids in Hong Kong are exploited by their own governments who send their citizens, men and women, to work abroad to benefit from the remittance income. Moreover, the unlimited supply of young female peasants from the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia enables the employers in Hong Kong to have an unchecked authority in hiring and firing the maids. This keen competition among maids from different countries further lowers their bargaining power. Some Indonesian maids may

even accept a monthly wage as low as \$1,800, which is less than half of the legal minimum of \$3,860.

In comparison, the class position of domestic maids in Hong Kong is even more marginal than that of black workers in Britain. While the black workers in Britain basically enjoy full citizenship, the immigration policy in Hong Kong does not allow the domestic maids to settle down. Besides, the gender difference makes it even more difficult for Asian maids to settle down.

In Britain the Asian community has settled down because many Asian males went back their homelands to get married and brought their wives back to Britain. Male domination in Asian families, however, does not encourage males to follow their wives to migrate and the Hong Kong government also forbids their husbands to come as dependants. Few Filipino maids ask their husbands to come and work in Hong Kong, while most of them just remit wages back to the Philippines and save every dollar to start some small businesses with their husbands on returning to their home countries. This transitional and 'passer-by' nature of the Asian maids drives them into an even more marginal position than British Asian male immigrants.

The segmentation of Asian domestic maids from the local population, together with their exclusion from the local labour movement due to their status of guest workers, disrupts the class formation of marginal workers in Hong Kong. These newcomers since the 1990s have occupied the lowest strata of marginal jobs in Hong Kong without integration into the local working class. I will discuss this distinct consciousness of the domestic maids in the

next chapter. Besides the domestic maids and the long-term unemployed local population, illegal workers from China have become the new source of marginal workers in the mid-1990s.

The Early to Mid-1990s: Imported Labour and Illegal Immigrants

In the early 1990s employers claimed that there was a serious shortage of labour in Hong Kong. Responding to this demand from capital, the Hong Kong government introduced several schemes to import workers, most of whom were from Mainland China. A general scheme for the importation of labour was first announced in 1992. It proposed that a maximum of 25,000 workers at the supervisory, technician and craftsman levels would be allowed to work in Hong Kong. The minimum wage of the imported workers was linked to the median wage of corresponding local workers in the same trade. The government promised that the benefits of local workers would be safeguarded.

The general public and trade union officials suspect that the protection measures for both foreign and local workers have never been effectively enforced. On the one hand, many foreign workers reported that they had been badly treated by their employers and received much lower wages than the legal minimum. On the other hand, local workers frequently complained that the imported workers had 'smashed their rice bowls'. The wage levels and job opportunities of local workers have been deteriorating tremendously since the introduction of this scheme. Not only workers in the manufacturing

industries, but also those in service industries, like catering, transport and retailing, were adversely affected.

Another special scheme was set up to import workers for the construction of the new airport. The initial quota was 2,000 in 1990, which was subsequently increased to 17,000 in 1994 and to a further 27,000 in 1996. This scheme has had a tremendous impact on the labour market of the construction industry since 1994. Many local construction workers suddenly found themselves unemployed and underemployed. The imported construction workers were only given around 40 to 50 per cent of the wages of the local workers. Paradoxically, the local workers' unfavourable situation changed only after hundreds of Chinese guest workers complained about their contractors for illegally denying them their basic and overtime pay. Confronted by the imported workers, the contractors realised that there was little advantage for them in employing imported workers. The contractors therefore began to re-employ local workers for the construction of the new airport.

Besides the legal importation of labour through various schemes, employers also employed illegal immigrants or overstayers from China, especially in the construction industry.¹⁰ Officials of the Hong Kong Construction General Union reported that illegal immigrants working in the construction industry received only just one fifth to one quarter of the wages

¹⁰ Illegal immigrants are those who enter Hong Kong without any legal documents, whereas the overstayers are those who enter Hong Kong with the two-way re-entry permit or as tourists but overstay in Hong Kong after the permitted date of stay.

of local construction workers.¹¹ Obviously, these illegal workers were heavily exploited. Worse still, on many occasions, the employers reported them to the police on pay day and many of the illegal immigrants were then caught and repatriated to China without getting the pay they should have had.¹²

From 1993 to 1996 there were over 50,000 illegal immigrants and overstayers in Hong Kong. In 1993 there were 37,517 illegal immigrants and 17,102 overstayers apprehended and repatriated to China by the Hong Kong authorities. In 1996, the number of illegal immigrants decreased to 23,180, but the number of overstayers increased to 28,007 (Far Eastern Economic Review, April 17, 1997). It is widely believed that a large number of illegal immigrants and overstayers have escaped from the police and become underground residents in Hong Kong. These underground residents are a new source of marginal workers in the 1990s.

The Late 1990s: Displaced Workers and the Unemployed

Restructuring of the Economy

Deindustrialisation in Hong Kong became significant and rapid after the early 1980s. Employment in the manufacturing sector as a percentage of total employment decreased from 41.3 per cent in 1981 to 28.3 per cent in 1991 and further to 18.8 per cent in 1996. In 1986 the number of workers

¹¹ Information is quoted from an interview with a officer of the Hong Kong Construction Workers General Union.

¹² Same as above.

employed in manufacturing industry was 946,653. It was the largest industry in Hong Kong in terms of workers employed. Owing to the continuous outflow of production capital, manufacturing industries lost some 178,000 jobs from 1981 to 1991. This de-industrialisation process accelerated in the early 1990s, and manufacturing industry lost another 193,000 jobs from 1991 to 1996 (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3: Working Population by Industry, Hong Kong, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996

Industry	1981	1986	1991	1996
Manufacturing	990,365	946,653	768,121	574,867
	41.2%	35.8%	28.3%	18.9%
Construction	185,999	164,268	187,851	245,440
	7.7%	6.2%	6.9%	8.1%
Wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels	461,489	589,918	611,386	757,239
	19.2%	22.3%	22.5%	24.9%
Transport, storage and communication	181,368	210,367	265,686	330,974
	7.5%	8.0%	9.8%	10.9%
Financing, insurance, real estate and business services	115,870	169,967	287,168	408,686
	4.8%	6.4%	10.6%	13.4%
Community, social and personal services	375,703	486,167	539,123	680,048
	15.6%	18.4%	19.9%	22.3%
Others	93,273	75,933	55,768	46,444
	3.9%	2.9%	2.1%	1.5%
Total	2,404,067	2,643,273	2,715,103	3,043,698

Sources: Hong Kong 1991 Population Census Main Reports, Table 5.14, p.95 and Hong Kong 1996 Population By-Census Main Reports, Table 5.13, p.82.

In line with other industrialised countries, the service sector in Hong Kong has generated more jobs since the 1980s. For instance, wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels increased from 16.2 per cent of the working population in 1971 to 24.9 per cent in 1996. Employment in financing, insurance, real estate and business services increased from 2.7 per cent in 1971 to 13.4 per cent in 1996.

There was also a simultaneous change in the internal employment structure of manufacturing industries. From 1981 to 1991 the number of operatives fell 43 per cent while non-production staff increased by 11 per cent.¹³ Manual workers in manufacturing industries have been adversely affected by the trends of deindustrialisation and white-collarisation.

Displaced Manufacturing Workers

Many manual workers have been forced to leave manufacturing industries for other industries. Owing to their poor education, most of them could merely shift to low-paid, unskilled and precarious jobs in service industries. More and more manual workers, especially women, middle-aged and elderly workers, are facing the impact of economic restructuring. These displaced workers, who had earlier worked in manufacturing industries, encounter difficulties in securing jobs because their skills hold little market value.

¹³ Census and Statistics Department, 'Structural Changes in Manufacturing Industries 1981-1991' in *Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics*, September 1993, p.119.

In 1992, according to the 'Occupation Mobility Study' by the Census and Statistics Department, about one in six (16.6%) people formerly employed in manufacturing industry five years ago had left that industry, that is 101,900 people. Among them, 47,800 changed to the services industry, 42,300 to the wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotel industry, and 10,400 to the construction industry (Census and Statistics Department 1993).

Most of the manual workers moved across to low-skilled jobs in the service industries. Among the 718,900 people who were craft and related workers, plant and machine operators, and assemblers in 1987, five years before the survey, 91,700 of them (12.8%) had changed their occupation. About 36,700, that is, four out of ten (40.0%) of these manual workers who had changed their occupation, became elementary labourers, whereas 19,300 (21.0%) became service workers and shop workers.

While displaced manufacturing workers find themselves trapped in low-paid jobs in the service industry, those who remain in manufacturing industries often experience under-employment and receive lower incomes. Manufacturing workers experience a slower increase in wages and a deterioration of living standards. The real wage index of craftsmen and operatives in manufacturing industry decreased from 100.9 in 1990 to 97.5 in 1996.¹⁴

Comparatively speaking, production workers in manufacturing industries who can retain their jobs in the same industry, or who can find

¹⁴ Census and Statistics Department (1998) *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics 1997*. Table 2.12 p.24.

low-paid jobs in service industries are fortunate, although they have much lower incomes. Many laid-off workers are so unfortunate that they can never re-enter the labour market to procure other employment.

The Rise of Structural Unemployment

During the late 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, the unemployment rate of Hong Kong stayed below 2 per cent, which was extremely low when compared with the current situation in western industrialised countries. However, the scenario has deteriorated since 1995. In 1995 the official unemployment rate was over 3 per cent for the first time since 1985. Nevertheless, after the financial crisis in Asia in October 1997 the unemployment rate experienced such a quick and tremendous surge that in the fourth quarter of 1998 it reached its historically high level of 5.8 per cent.

Many academic studies and the trade unions complain that the official statistics have under-estimated the unemployment problem in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (HKFTU) has conducted a series of quarterly surveys on the unemployment rate among its members since the fourth quarter of 1994.¹⁵ In the third quarter of 1997, the HKFTU estimated that the unemployment rate of its 250,000 members, most of whom were unskilled and semiskilled labourers, was 8.1 per cent, compared with 2.2 per cent in the official estimation.

¹⁵ Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions is the largest trade union federation in Hong Kong with more than 250,000 members in 1998.

In their study on hidden unemployment in Hong Kong, Chan et al. (1998) estimate that the unemployment rate from December 1996 to February 1997 was 6.7 per cent, which was much higher than 2.4 per cent, the government estimation for the same period. They also find that 11.7 per cent of women engaged in housework were willing to work. If the unemployed included these 'hidden' unemployed housewives, the unemployment rate rose to 8.5 per cent. Moreover, if the unemployed included those hidden unemployed middle-aged and old-aged people, who were simply classified as retired persons by the official survey, the unemployment rate would further increase to 11.7 per cent. It implies that the real unemployment rate would be about five times the official unemployment rate of 2.4 per cent.

Due to the rise in unemployment and the underemployment of marginal workers as well as stagnant wages, poverty and inequality in Hong Kong have worsened tremendously. The number of cases under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme, the only government-financed income support scheme in Hong Kong, rose sharply from 66,675 in 1990-1991 to 189,527 in January 1998. Among the different types of cases, unemployment cases had the highest rate of increase. In 1994-1995, there were merely 5,302 unemployed CSSA cases, which increased to 14,964 in 1996-1997 and then sharply increased to some 23,700 in July 1998. These figures demonstrate that a growing number of unemployed households are living below the minimum poverty line.

Displaced Women Manufacturing Workers

Mei (HK19, F/30, Chinese) had been working as a sewer of jeans in the same garment industry since she was 16. She stayed there for twelve years. The factory is one of the biggest jeans manufacturers in Hong Kong. Mei was a 'fast-horse' (quick worker) earning 9,000 to 10,000 dollars a month. A good piece rate, a stable supply of work, a large factory, all these were the dreams of most manufacturing women workers. Unfortunately, just after the death of the owner of the factory who had refused to relocate production to China, Mei was made redundant in 1992.

Mei wanted to sew jeans or trousers in other factories to use her accumulated skills and speed in sewing trousers. However, she could only find short-term and temporary jobs and she had to hop from one factory to another from 1992 to 1994. Even worse, since 1994, she has not been able to find any temporary work. She became unemployed

Mei: 'I am a skilled worker. But all of a sudden, you find that your skills are not needed. Your skills are worthless. Why? Could you tell me why?'

Looking for a Decent Job

It was difficult for manufacturing women workers to obtain once again permanent or temporary jobs in manufacturing industry. However, the extremely low pay in the service industry, which might be lower than the necessary reproduction cost of labour, became a barrier preventing displaced women workers getting a job in it. Being one of the thousands of displaced

women workers, Kwai (HK17, F/33, Chinese) demanded a decent wage which was enough to support herself and her children.

Kwai: 'I am living in Tuen Mun. If I need to travel by bus to work in Kowloon, it costs me twenty dollars for the bus fare. Moreover, you need another twenty to thirty dollars for lunch. I need forty to fifty necessary expenses for travel and lunch every working day. However, they offer me only 4,000 dollars for the post of cleaner. If I go to work, I need to pay about 2,000 dollars to the nursery. As a result, I worked full-time outside, but what I got is just five hundred dollars. It wasn't worth it. The pay is too low.'

Apart from the low wages of the service industry, the loss of dignity of being a skilled worker whose skills are no longer in demand also puzzles the displaced women workers. After Mei (HK19) was unemployed, she wished to get a job in the service industry.

Mei: 'Although I was employed as a beauty assistant, my job is worse than the Filipino maids. The beauty shop was inside a shopping arcade without a water supply in the shop. I had to carry more than twenty to thirty buckets of water from the toilet to the shop. I had to clean the shop, and even worship the goddess. The employer demanded I wore make-up as they're a beauty shop. However, as I had to climb up and down, my sweat dissolved all the make-up. I was scolded for that. I felt humiliated. I couldn't stand it, then I left.'

New Immigrant Families

In addition to the displaced manufacturing women workers who found themselves trapped in low-skilled and low-paid service jobs, new immigrant women, who have come to join their husbands since the mid-1990s, also found themselves propelled to accept even lower pay and worse working conditions than local displaced workers.

The Basic Law guarantees the right of abode of children of Hong Kong citizens, even if the children are born in Mainland China. Therefore, the government increased the quota of the family entry of Chinese new immigrants from 105 to 150 per day. A large number of wives and children of male immigrants have been flocking into Hong Kong, forming the most recent wave of Chinese new immigrants since the mid-1990s. New immigrant women in Hong Kong share many characteristics with black women in Britain. Both face racial discrimination from mainstream society and male domination in the workplace and family. Both of them are confined to low-paid and low-skilled jobs, mainly in the service sector. Moreover, they are more likely to be trapped in a single parent situation than the mainstream population.

Ethnic Discrimination

Some new immigrant women, especially those from the urban areas in China, had completed higher secondary education and had some working experience in China. However, their education, qualifications and working experiences are not recognised in Hong Kong. They, therefore, are confined to those low-paid and low-skilled jobs like cleaners and shop assistants in the service industry. Oi (HK43, F/40, Chinese new immigrant) was a secondary school graduate in Mainland China and had had over ten years of working experience as a teacher in a kindergarten before she came to Hong Kong.

Oi: 'When I went to apply for the post as teacher in kindergartens in Hong Kong, the headmistresses told me that I was not qualified. They did not recognise my secondary education and working experience in China. She said that I had to get a Hong Kong school certificate in order to get the job.'

Many employers exploit the weak bargaining power of the new immigrants and offer them lower wages and worse working conditions than the local workers. Wen (HK46, F/42, Chinese new immigrant) was a graduate from a post-secondary college and worked as a skilled draftswoman in a large state enterprise in *Guangzhou*. Although she had lowered her expectations and was prepared to accept a lower wage than local applicants, after twelve months of searching, she still failed to get a job as a draftswoman. Finally, Wen got a job as a messenger in a small factory.

Wen: 'My job title is a messenger. However, during the interview, my employer told me that apart from sending samples and letters to other factories, I had to be responsible for using a cart to deliver heavy goods to a lorry. Moreover, I needed to help draft some drawings for the factory. For so many tasks, including drafting, the employer only offered me five thousand dollars a month. I had no choice. Although I knew it was unfair, I had to take the job.'

Before she came to Hong Kong, Lam (HK42, F/40, Chinese new immigrant) knew that her husband was poor, but she hoped that her husband would give more concern and care to her and their son. However, her husband did not give any financial support to the family, either before or after they came to Hong Kong. Lam chose to work hard as she did before in China to support herself and her son.

Lacking support from her husband and facing discrimination from the local Chinese, Lam said, 'I am helpless. It is difficult to find a job. As I am

illiterate, I am looked down upon by the local people. I totally can't accept that situation.'

Lam eventually worked as a salesperson in a wholesale shop selling garments. She worked more than eleven hours a day and her wage was only 5,500 HKD per month. However, after only three months, she was fired because she asked for sick leave when she got a stomach-ache. She then became a salesperson in another shop for one year. She was fired again since she had to take her son to China to have an operation. Lam then faced unemployment, which is really typical among new immigrant females.

Lam 'I am a new immigrant, so it is very difficult for me to find a job. Luckily, I've got a little savings, which could support us for a short while. I find some casual work in restaurants working as a labourer. The pay is 200 HKD, but the work is irregular. Therefore, I am having a very hard time.'

Male Domination

Like the Asian females in Britain, new immigrant women in Hong Kong face double oppression. Besides discrimination from the mainstream, they also face male domination from their husbands.

Having been separated from their husbands for a long time, many female new immigrants have poor relations with their husbands. Worse still, they may find that their husbands have extra-marital affairs with other women. Within her first year in Hong Kong, Lam discovered that her husband had many girlfriends in China and often received phone calls and letters from his girlfriends.

Lam: 'A friend told me that my husband had already lived with a woman in China. He only returns once every half a year. Our home is just a hotel for him to rest. He even made long distance-calls to his girlfriends but said I should pay the phone bill. I didn't pay the bill last month, so the telephone company cut the line. He argued with me about that and he beat me several times. I am thinking of divorce.'

Some new immigrant women are even physically assaulted by their husbands. Ching (HK30, F/42, Chinese new immigrant) was abused and beaten by her husband after she had arrived at Hong Kong with her son.

Ching: 'After I had been in Hong Kong, I was abused by him. I felt sick and even collapsed. He is cruel. He beat both my son and me. My son was also beaten by his aunt. He neither allowed my son to study nor me to work. I come to Hong Kong as if I am falling into a trap. There was nobody to help. I couldn't even sleep. My son begged me every night to take him back to China.'

Passing The Point of No Return

Ching found that after they had migrated to Hong Kong, they had passed the point of no return. It was impossible for them to move back to China.

Ching: 'I have no relatives in China. If I go back to China, I will lose everything. The Chinese government have cancelled our household registration. I cannot find a job there, and my husband will not support me.'

The Single Mother

In order to escape from their husbands' abuses, both Man (HK22, F/31, Chinese new immigrant) and Ching separated from their husbands and became single mothers. Due to the limited job opportunities for new immigrant women, both of them had to depend on the Comprehensive Social

Security Assistance Scheme (CSSA). However, in common with the single mothers in Britain, Man found that she was trapped as a dependant in the state benefit system. The Social Welfare Department workers required her to work full-time if she wanted to place her daughter in a full-day nursery. However, if she took a full-time job, she could not take care of her daughter when she was ill and during her holidays.

Man: 'In my heart, I want to work. I had no alternative when my daughter was young. After my daughter gets older and if our residential place is stable, I don't want to depend on the government. We people stand on our own feet. If we are dependent on the government for a long time, it seems that we are not human beings.'

In the previous section I have described the inflow of new immigrant males in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, which provided an abundant supply of labour power for the construction and manufacturing industries. Their relatives, most of them women and children, have flocked to Hong Kong to reunite with their families since the mid-1990s. Their subordinated status and their social exclusion from the mainstream make these 'new immigrants' an ethnic minority group in Hong Kong, who encounter the same problems as ethnic minorities in Britain.

A Permeable Class Structure

In Hong Kong only a few studies have addressed the class formation of the working class in general, and the impact of intra-generational class mobility on working class formation in particular. Hong Kong and Taiwan share similar characteristics of medium and small enterprises, and the

tendency of workers to set up their own small workshops or family enterprises by becoming small entrepreneurs or contractors – ‘black hands become their own bosses’.¹⁶ I will start my discussion of the process of class formation of marginal workers in Hong Kong with the better-documented experiences of their counterparts in Taiwan.

Shieh (1989), in his mobility study about manufacturing workers in the small factories in Taiwan, suggests that the ‘jump’ from ‘black hands’ to ‘their own bosses’ does not necessarily mean a real change in class consciousness.

Shieh argues that the experiences of these small ‘bosses’ should produce contradictory class experience, yet the opportunities for upward mobility ‘manufacture their consent’ to the capitalist system in three areas.¹⁷ Firstly, when faced with a lack of protection in the production process and limited opportunities for advancement in the enterprises, workers do not voice their discontent, but adopt an ‘exit’ strategy, or ‘black hands becoming their own bosses’ tactic. The ‘exit’ not only releases the discontent of the employees, but increases the prospect of being able to control their own fate. Therefore, it increases their consent to the existing capitalist system. Secondly, after the black hands become their own bosses, they are more industrious and they work longer hours. They experience freedom and mastery of the economic fruits of their labour and capital. Although their orders are still controlled by

¹⁶ ‘Black hands’ in Taiwan refers to the skilled manual workers who have not received a formal technical or vocational training, but who fully understand the technical know-how in the production process.

¹⁷ For the meaning of ‘manufacture consent’, please refer to p.80 of this thesis.

others, they hold a more advantageous position than before. Thirdly, the large capitalists tend to encourage 'black hands to become their own bosses' to pacify workers. Shieh concludes that when 'black hands become their own bosses', the making of a working class is hindered, but 'consent' among small entrepreneurs and employees with the existing capitalist system is manufactured.

Although I basically support the arguments of Shieh, I would comment that the sequence described by Shieh is incomplete. In the 1980s and 1990s, amidst the wider context of deindustrialisation and the outflow of production capital, Hong Kong and Taiwan experienced a stronger reverse-mobility tendency – with small entrepreneurs themselves becoming workers.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, as shown in the following examples of Mui and Jan, manufacturing workers in Hong Kong could easily move up to become small employers or sub-contractors. However, the class structure is so fluid that small employers move downwards and become marginal workers again. This uncertain class location of marginal workers reflects the permeable class structure in Hong Kong. Moreover, the fluctuating and contradictory experiences in their class trajectory produce an ambiguous and uncertain consciousness – radical against conservative, collective against individual, and altruistic against hedonistic. This uncertain class location of marginal workers contributes to their 'amorphous' consciousness. In previous sections, I have already introduced the mobile career history and uncertain class location of

the Chinese male marginal workers: Ong (HK07) in the 1960s and Wong (HK38) in the 1980s. In the following section, I will introduce the impacts of the uncertain class location of two Chinese female marginal workers on their consciousness.

Table 6.4: Work History of Mui (HK05)

Year	Age	Work and Life Events
1942	0	Born in <i>Zhongzhan Xian</i> , China.
1949	7	Unpaid family worker on family farm and doing domestic work.
1960	18	Sneaked into Macau. Worked as domestic maid.
1962	20	Manufacturing worker produced plastic wallets, garments.
1965	23	Married, still worked as garment worker.
1967	25	Stopped working after the birth of eldest son.
1968	26	Wool-knitting outworker with husband working as inworker.
1971	29	Subcontracting knitting outwork to neighbours.
1981	39	Manufacturing worker in an electronics factory.
1983	41	Cleaner in a secondary school.
1991	49	Multi-jobs as part-time cleaner and domestic worker.

Table 6.5: Work History of Jan (HK10)

Year	Age	Work and Life Events
1947	0	Born in Vietnam.
1963	16	Stopped studying in the first year of higher form. Worked as catering worker and then proof-reader for newspapers.
1964	17	Sneaked into Hong Kong by boat.
1965	18	Beads-threading worker.
1966	19	Toy manufacturing worker in various factories, stitching doll's hair.
1971	24	Promoted to be a supervisor in a new toy firm.
1981	34	Factory closed down. Set up own back-yard 'Shan chai' factory with two stitching machines at home and subcontracted work to other outworkers, mostly neighbours.
1982	35	Set up a toy cottage factory in partnership with her husband, brother and two ex-colleagues.
1983	36	Factory moved back to China, Jan responsible for marketing and sales, finding orders for the factory.
1987	40	Financial crisis of the factory due to bad debt and gloomy toy industry. Her brother and other partners quit the factory, left Jan and her husband to run the factory. Jan worked in Hong Kong while her husband was responsible for the management of the factory in China.
1990	43	Jan found her husband had extra-marital affair with a woman in China. She was frustrated and left the factory. Jan then became a supervisor in another toy firm in China.

In Tables 6.4 and 6.5, I have summarised the work histories of Mui (HK05, F/54, Chinese new immigrant in the 1960s) and Jan (HK10, F/50, overseas Chinese). Their work histories show interesting similarities as well as differences. Above all, both cases illustrate the typical 'uncertain class location' thesis. Both of them migrated to Hong Kong in the early 1960s in their late teens. While Mui only finished her primary school education in Mainland China, Jan received a better education and finished her junior secondary education in Vietnam. Mui moved up from being a housemaid to becoming a factory worker, when she left Macau for Hong Kong. She quit

the traditional woman's job of being a maid amidst the fast expanding manufacturing industry in Hong Kong. Jan, however, was downgraded from being a non-manual worker in Vietnam to becoming a manual factory worker in Hong Kong. Her educational qualifications and work experience were of no use given the social exclusion strategy of the colonial government.

Starting as a garment worker, Mui, to a large extent, was 'forced' to become an outworker after she had given birth to her first son. She gradually became a subcontractor giving outworking tasks to her neighbours. Literally, she became a petty-bourgeois who exploited herself and her fellow outworkers. They earned about two to four Hong Kong dollars per dozen products by subcontracting out to other outworkers. In the high season they earned about 5,500 HKD per 'term',¹⁸ whereas in the low season they made as little as a few hundred. Although the profit was not large, Mui displayed her bourgeois consciousness, as she had a feeling of mastery from owning one's own means of production.

Mui 'It's what we earned. We owned the sewing machines. We did not have to share with someone else.'

Mui agreed that the outworkers worked very hard but she did not consider it a kind of exploitation of the outworkers. Mui claimed that outworkers could earn at the most little more than a thousand dollars. Most of the time they received about eight hundred dollars for a 'term', which was

¹⁸ Here one 'term' means a fortnight which is the duration for wage calculations for most manual workers in Hong Kong.

even higher than the income of an average inworker in the wool knitting factory.

Mui: 'But they were very arduous. They started to knit for me as early as five in the early morning. They knitted from the early morning to night. They knitted until they were very tired and had to go to sleep. It's arduous.'

This 'uncertain' class location of Mui also contributed to an amorphous consciousness. Mui, on the one hand, viewed her outwork as a practice helping those housewives of 'boat people'¹⁹ to escape from poverty and social exclusion, but on the other hand, she wanted to make a profit from this 'controllable' and reliable labour power.

Mui: 'The people on the land always looked down on those who were boat people. I wanted to help a neighbour, who was a boat person, by getting her to work for me, so that she could have some income. However, I was greedy too. You know, by that, I could have a person who could always work for me.'

Mui was forced to end her subcontracting business after ten years as the orders for outwork significantly declined. Her family could not live on subcontracting outwork anymore, so she went back to being a factory worker. Becoming a wage earner again becomes a necessary survival strategy.

Mui: 'The worst case was I was so poor that I couldn't afford a ten cent coin for my son to buy bread. Before I went back to work in the factory, we experienced this kind of situation.'

Mui also tried to minimise the economic risks of putting all her eggs in one basket. While her husband still worked as a subcontractor, Mui got a

¹⁹ 'Boat people' means those ex-fishermen family, who have left fishing and moved to live on the land.

factory job so that Mui could receive stable cash flow of being a worker, rather than depend on the unstable profit of being a subcontractor.

Mui: 'Well, you got some "live money". Because my mother-in-law was in Hong Kong and my son was studying in a secondary school. You know some of the factories were so bad that they did not pay you [the subcontracting fee] on time. A lot of money was held up. By being a factory worker, I got money every fifteenth day of every month.'

Mui moved down in the class structure. She worked as a shop-floor worker in an electronics factory. Due to deindustrialisation, Mui then lost her industrial job, so she worked as a cleaner in a secondary school. Facing further marginalisation, Mui then became a multi-jobs worker engaging in several part-time jobs as a cleaner and domestic helper.

With a better education and an assertive character, Jan was promoted to being a supervisor. However, like Mui, Jan was 'forced' to set up a family factory in her home as a survival strategy after the factory closed down. This 'forced' upward mobility, nevertheless, did not last long as they were the most vulnerable layer in the multi-layers of the subcontracting manufacturing network.

Jan encountered serious financial difficulties after she had set up the small toy factory with her husband and her brother. At first, their factory earned several hundreds of thousands of dollars for the first two orders. Nevertheless, they faced an unexpected but common problem of small entrepreneurs. They could not collect the money from the trading firms for the orders they had completed. Their factory, like the others, depended on

the trading firms to provide orders to sustain the life of the business, as well as money for repaying the costs of materials and labour. However, many small trading firms are so unstable that they vanish or declare themselves bankrupt easily. So do many of the small family factories.

Jan: 'In the end, a firm couldn't repay its debt to us. Several hundreds of thousands of dollars. We thought it could repay before Christmas. We got a cheque. Then we found there was no money in the account. We went to the firm only to find that the flat was vacant. And then we were chased to repay money to others. We had to repay our debts with our savings.'

After that incident, Jan then moved their factory back to China to lower production costs. However, the toy business was gloomy. Her brother and other partners gradually left the factory and became workers again. Only Jan and her husband stayed behind to run the whole factory. Jan stayed in Hong Kong and looked after the orders, finance and liaison with other factories, while her husband lived in China, in charge of production management. After she discovered that her husband had had an affair with a woman in China, Jan was totally disappointed and frustrated. She gave up the factory which she had devoted herself to for eight years. She moved down from a location as a small employer back to the previous location of being a supervisor in another toy factory in China.

Many small entrepreneurs and subcontractors like Mui and Jan experienced more failures rather than successes due to the volatile international market, fluctuating orders and keen competition. Their failures are scarcely reported in popular business magazines. The successful stories of the millionaire 'Chinese Entrepreneurs' are built on the thousands of

unnoticed stories of tears and sorrow of the bankrupted small entrepreneurs and subcontractors.

Since the mid-1980s, due to deindustrialisation in Hong Kong and the rise of the NNICs,²⁰ small employers have experienced a significant downward mobility. The stories of Mui and Jan demonstrate that Hong Kong is an 'open' society where workers can set up their own small businesses with few barriers. However, an 'open' society also implies that these small businesses can easily fail as and when there is little support from the state and big capital. Therefore, the class location of the small bosses is quite unstable so that they easily 'fall from grace' and become part of the working class (like Jan) or even worse become part of the marginal class (like Mui). This uncertain class location disrupts the continuous process of the formation of working and marginal classes.

Summary: A Disrupted Class Formation

I have synthesised data from the Labour Characteristics Survey, the General Household Survey (GHS) and various Census reports in Hong Kong in estimating the size and distribution of various categories of marginal workers. The distinction between mainstream and marginal is not so clear in Hong Kong as in the case in Britain. Nevertheless, most workers in Hong Kong, like the casual and informal workers in the 1950s, manufacturing workers in the 1960s and 1970s and service workers in the 1990s are indeed

²⁰ For a definition of NNICs see footnote 3 in Chapter 3.

engaged in low-paid and insecure jobs. Therefore, a great majority of workers in Hong Kong are marginal workers. A significant number of different groups of marginal workers constitute an indispensable part of the labour force in the post-war capital accumulation of Hong Kong. This supports the thesis that 'marginal is critical'.

Furthermore, I have also presented the work and life histories of marginal workers. I am convinced that with help to control new immigrants from China and guest workers from the Hong Kong government, Hong Kong capitalists have successfully exploited the subordinated ethnic and gender positions of different groups of workers in creating successive waves of marginal workers.

The class formation of marginal workers in Hong Kong is different from that of Britain. The formation of new groups of marginal workers in Britain is related to the change and decomposition of the old ones. In Hong Kong, however, the introduction of new groups of marginal workers is mainly through the incorporation of the newcomers into the original workforce in Hong Kong.

Chinese refugees in the late 1940s and early 1950s became casual and informal economy workers in the 1950s. The second wave of economic illegal Chinese immigrants, including men and women, in the 1960s, provided abundant labour power for the development of manufacturing in the late 1960s and the 1970s. The influx of the third wave of Chinese illegal immigrants, mainly young male workers, in the late 1970s and early 1980s

enabled the boom in the construction industry in the 1980s. The importation of domestic maids and guest workers in the 1990s has provided a new source of labour power to fill the low-paid jobs in the service industry.

Facing exclusion and discrimination, most members of the successive waves of newcomers took up the most vulnerable economic positions in the labour market after they had entered Hong Kong. The earlier settlers thus could enjoy relatively better economic positions, as they might become small employers and climb up the class ladder. Moreover, these earlier settlers also enjoyed better social positions, as their families could receive better housing and education subsidies from the state. The inflow of new groups of marginal workers thus has a displacement effect so that those on the top layer of the marginal workers may have had a chance to become mainstream workers. This explains why the class boundary between mainstream and marginal workers is not so distinct and the class structure is more permeable than is the case of Britain. I use the term 'disrupted class formation' to denote that the process of the class formation of marginal workers in Hong Kong has never been completed since it has been disrupted by successive high inflows of newcomers and high outflows of the old settlers. The disrupted class formation in Hong Kong is also facilitated by its permeable class structure where workers move easily upwards and downwards across the class boundary between mainstream and marginal. In my next section, I will compare and contrast the class structure and class formation of marginal workers in Britain and Hong Kong.

Comparison of the Class Formation of Marginal Workers in Britain and Hong Kong

Having introduced the historical class formation process and class structure of marginal workers in Britain and Hong Kong, I would like to synthesise the arguments and compare and contrast the similarities and dissimilarities of marginal workers in Britain and Hong Kong as a conclusion to this chapter.

Similarities

Marginal is Critical

Despite having to adopt different sources of data, I have shown that marginal workers have existed in different periods and have constituted a significant part of the workforce after the Second World War in both Britain and Hong Kong. Marginal workers are not minor, unimportant and transient elements in the process of capital accumulation in the two regions. The utilisation of consecutive waves of migrant workers in the two regions from the 1950s to the 1990s also suggests that the existence of marginal workers is not a transient or temporary phenomenon, but that it persists permanently and consistently in different historical periods. Marginal workers not only persist in a mature capitalist society which is under a Fordist mode of production like Britain, but also in a NIC which is under a flexible mode of production like Hong Kong.

Gender and Ethnicity as the Main Sorting Mechanism

Exploiting the social, physical, cultural or organisational differences among people of different ethnic origins and gender, capital maintains a divide and rule strategy towards labour. Capital's main objective is to sustain a continuous supply of low-wage workers and keep them under control. The migrants/ethnic minorities and women in both Britain and Hong Kong often find themselves trapped in low-paid and insecure jobs.

Both Britain and Hong Kong began to make extensive use of migrant workers in the 1950s and 1960s. Influxes of the Irish, Caribbean, Asian and then the EC nationals have provided the necessary workforce for the development of manufacturing and then service industries in Britain. Coincidentally, in Hong Kong, different inflows of Chinese immigrants have also provided an unlimited supply of cheap labour for the labour intensive manufacturing and construction industries. The importation of domestic maids in Hong Kong after the 1980s, likewise, has also enabled local married women to continue participating in the labour market and has facilitated the growth of the service industry.

Other than ethnicity, gender is another major factor for determining the class position of marginal workers. In Britain, part-time women workers are the major sub-group of women marginal workers; whereas part-time work is not so popular among women in Hong Kong. Under gender domination, married women in Britain are responsible for most of the household work, so the creation of part-time jobs is done to suit the conflicting needs of working

mothers in caring for the family and working as a wage worker to support the family simultaneously. By contrast, the subordinated role of middle class housewives in Hong Kong is substituted by the subordinated position of domestic maids. Having employed the domestic maids, middle class married women in Hong Kong can free themselves from household routine work and engage in full-time jobs.

In addition, many subgroups in both regions share astonishing similarities in their ethnic, gender and class positions. For instance, the Irish males and the Chinese male immigrants; the Caribbean single mothers and the *Shunde* spinsters. All in all, ethnicity and gender are the two main sorting mechanisms in determining the class locations of marginal workers.

Articulated and Intensified Gender and Ethnic Inequalities

Most of the 'new' immigrants in Hong Kong are from the *Guangdong* province of China, who share the same skin colour and appearance as the local Chinese in Hong Kong. However, like the Irish in England, new Chinese immigrants can be distinguished easily from the local Hong Kong Chinese by their accent. It is interesting to note that the sphere of the new Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong also primarily resembles that of the Irish. Both of them are concentrated in the labour market of unskilled labourers in the construction industry. While the Irish are employed in the 'cash' economy and are involved in the hidden economy to evade tax or National Insurance payments, many workers in the construction industry in Hong

Kong are illegal underground immigrants from China. Both of them are notable participants in the shadow or underground economy. Moreover, the Irish in Britain and the Chinese immigrants entering Hong Kong in the 1970s both face higher unemployment rates than the mainstream and are more likely to remain single in their old age. This shows that ethnic discrimination exists in both Britain and Hong Kong and pushes the Irish and the Chinese immigrants to the fringes of mainstream society. Ethnic inequalities are thus articulated with and intensified by class inequalities.

The Impact of the Policies of the State

The rise and fall of different groups of migrant workers in the two regions is strongly influenced by the immigration policies of the state. The two governments first allowed the inflow of migrant workers from the New Commonwealth and China to fill low-paid jobs. However, when the migrants settled down and demanded, inter alia, the right of their families to join them and, in addition, demanded welfare and political rights which limited their exploitation, both governments took steps to curtail their entry into the respective countries. Amendments to the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962 and Immigration Act in 1971 by the British government, and the cancellation of the 'touch-base' policy in 1981 by the Hong Kong government, were typical examples of intervention of the state. Both governments are similar in their tightening of the safety net to 'motivate' welfare recipients to work and get back into the labour market. By tightening application criteria and cutting benefits for the unemployed in

Britain and the CSSA in Hong Kong, they force the unemployed back into the labour market.

Dissimilarities

I have just described the similarities between the processes of class formation of marginal workers in Britain and Hong Kong. Now I am going to discuss the significant differences.

Semi-Permeable vs. Permeable Class Structure

Different class structures have prominent impacts on the process of class formation of the two regions. The class boundary between mainstream and marginal workers is more distinct in Britain than in Hong Kong. The marginal trap class structure with its semi-permeable class boundary in Britain continues to push more and more affluent workers into the location of the marginal class. Moreover, since marginal workers are concentrated in the inner cities, especially in council house localities, this residential segregation makes them more aware of their own interests. They may also share similar ethnic, gender and class locations. The more homogenous community also provides marginal workers with a base for organised struggles in the locality. Last but not least, many of the marginal workers become welfare recipients, but they have been under attack by the state which has cut back welfare in the name of 'terminating welfare dependency'. Therefore, the state's 'new right' policies instigate discontent among various groups of the marginal class. The defence of welfare provides a new arena of struggle and alliances among

the marginal working class. All these factors contribute to the formation of a marginal working class in Britain, which can be easily distinguished from mainstream workers.

The permeable class structure between mainstream and marginal workers in Hong Kong, however, has not allowed a smooth process of class formation of marginal workers as in the case of Britain. The high upward and downward mobility between mainstream and marginal jobs in the career path of Hong Kong workers blurs the class boundary between the mainstream and the marginal. Moreover, the fast speed of urban redevelopment and the establishment of satellite towns in Hong Kong also induce a high geographical mobility among workers in Hong Kong.

In addition, the Hong Kong government deliberately mixes up public rental housing estates with home-ownership-schemes²¹ and private with public housing through town planning and redevelopment programmes in order to prevent the concentration of the working class in a particular community. The fast pace of changes and the heterogeneous nature of community settings disrupt the original working class community. All of the above factors have negative effects on the class formation of marginal workers in Hong Kong.

²¹ The public housing programme in Hong Kong is basically composed of two parts: rental public housing and home-ownership scheme. By the home-ownership scheme, tenants, sitting tenants and citizens who have fulfilled the criteria may buy the flats.

Sedimentary vs. Disrupted Class Formation

Owing to the differences in class structure and other factors mentioned above, the class formations of marginal workers in the two regions have specific and notable characteristics. I propose that the historical process of the class formation of marginal workers in Britain is 'sedimentary', whereas that in Hong Kong is 'disrupted'.

In Britain, membership of the marginal working class is basically stable with ethnic minority workers and women workers at the core of the marginal working class since the 1960s. It is of no consequence that these workers have changed to different industries or have been engaged in a different status as self-employed, homeworkers, casual workers, part-time workers or temporary workers; they remain working as marginal workers. Most of these old members of the marginal class are still engaged in low-paid and insecure jobs. Since the 1970s, membership of the marginal workers has increased and included those white male manual workers who were displaced from the manufacturing and construction industry. The incorporation of the newcomers in Britain, however, did not substitute the old members as in the case of Hong Kong.

In Hong Kong, we witness a more diffused and dynamic membership of the marginal working class. Firstly, there are consistent inflows of newcomers: Chinese immigrants in the late 1940s, the late 1950s, the early 1960s and the late 1970s, Asian domestic maids in the 1980s and 1990s, guest workers and illegal migrant workers in the 1990s. Most of the newcomers

have occupied the most vulnerable economic positions, which were originally occupied by the former settlers. After the Chinese immigrants settled down, their class position and life chances became similar to those of ethnic minorities in Britain. However, Asian domestic maids and illegal immigrants cannot settle down as it is prohibited by the state. Their status as guest workers or underground economy workers makes their social and economic position different from that of other marginal workers. Therefore, it is difficult for them to unite with other marginal workers to form an organic marginal working class.

Secondly, there are constant outflows of marginal workers. In order to survive or advance their interests, many marginal workers in Hong Kong opt for setting up small businesses and become 'one's own bosses' after they have settled down and saved enough money with help from their family. Their 'uncertain class location' and fluctuating class mobility experience also inhibit these former settlers from developing a radical working class consciousness. Instead they develop an 'amorphous' consciousness. In the next chapter I will discuss the similarity and dissimilarity of consciousness and action among the marginal workers in Britain and Hong Kong.

Marginal is Critical: Consciousness and Action of Marginal Workers

By scrutinising the consciousness and actions of marginal workers in Britain and Hong Kong, I will explore in this chapter the following questions: Are marginal workers critical of their exploitation and oppression? Have the consciousness and actions of marginal workers in Britain and Hong Kong generated different paths of class formation in the two regions?

I argue that 'marginal is critical', suggesting that marginal workers will develop a critical consciousness towards their exploitation and oppression. This critical consciousness should provide a unified identity and ideological base for marginal workers collectively to fight against their exploitation and oppression. In other words, I argue that this critical consciousness can divide and deepen the class cleavage between marginal workers and mainstream workers. A distinct class of marginal workers therefore develops out of the mainstream working class.

My oral history data supports the general claim that 'marginal is critical' and that 'a marginal class is in-the-making' in both Britain and Hong Kong. Nevertheless, having the advantage of conducting a comparative study,

I have observed a lot of similarities and differences between the consciousness and actions of marginal workers in Britain and Hong Kong. The comparative materials help me to rethink and revise my original model. I find in reality that the causal relations among the class location, consciousness and action of marginal workers are more complicated than the simplistic, uni-directional and deterministic assumptions in my original formulations. I will reflect on the theoretical underpinnings in the next, concluding, chapter. In this chapter, I will outline the oral history data and address the above research questions.

Firstly, marginal workers in both Britain and Hong Kong have shown a counter, non-conforming and cynical consciousness towards oppression and exploitation, which supports the notion that 'marginal is critical' – my main thesis. However, the marginal consciousness of marginal workers varies significantly in quantity as well as quality in both regions. While the attitudes of British marginal workers are more aggressive, radical and well-formed, marginal workers in Hong Kong are more defensive, conservative and amorphous.

Marginal is Critical: The Consciousness of Marginal Workers

Despite facing combined and reinforced domination and exploitation from capital, the state and patriarchy, marginal workers are not powerless. Since their marginal class position develops their critical consciousness towards exploitation and ethnic and gender domination, they do not submit

themselves passively. Marginal is critical. They consciously take action to fight against the domination and exploitation imposed on them in overt and covert ways.

In this section I will firstly focus on how marginal workers generate and inherit ethnic, gender and class identities and consciousness. Then I will compare and contrast the similarities and differences in psychological traits and socialist beliefs between British and Hong Kong marginal workers. Marginal workers, in both Britain and Hong Kong, possess a marginal consciousness whereby they dislike unfair treatment, appeal for freedom and demand a dignified life. Furthermore, most of them resist the oppression and exploitation imposed upon them.

Ethnic Consciousness

In previous chapters, I have argued that an ethnic division of labour, manifested by the use of migrant workers, was utilised by capital in the post-war period. In Britain although racism and ethnocentrism have been encouraged among mainstream workers to enable the super-exploitation of ethnic minority or minority ethnic¹ workers, the marginal position of black workers has constructed a non-conformist consciousness among various ethnic communities. These ethnic communities consciously resist their total

¹ Cole (1993) advocates that it is desirable to use ethnic self definitions in nomenclature, rather than employing problematic terms: 'black' (a relatively long-standing radical formulation) and 'black and ethnic minority' (the emerging sociological orthodoxy). I basically agree with Cole's suggestion that in the text of this thesis, I often refer to the self-defined term used by the informants. However, on other occasions, I may use 'black' interchangeably with 'ethnic minority' referring to all ethnic minority groups, while I use black Caribbean and Asian referring to the minority ethnic sub-groups who came or originated from the Caribbean and the Asian Sub-continent respectively.

integration into mainstream white society. Ethnic consciousness, black identity and a capacity for preserving their way of life, always means a counter consciousness.

Marginal Man

Facing institutionalised racial discrimination and exclusion by mainstream society, many members of the ethnic minorities became 'marginal men' caught between two cultures (Dick-Clark 1966; Merton 1957; Park 1928; Stonequist 1935). On the one hand, ethnic minority men and women do not fully identify with the home countries where they, their parents or grandparents came from. On the other hand, they cannot and will not 'integrate' into mainstream society in their host countries. Despite facing severe racial harassment in Britain, Aneil (UK41, M/40, Pakistani), like thousands of other Asians, found that he could not go back to Pakistan. He was trapped in a marginal social and cultural position in both Britain and Pakistan.

Aneil: 'Because I feel that we have been living here for so long, although sometimes I wish I could still be there [Pakistan]. But I find that when you go there, the attitude of people is so different that you feel that you do not belong there. When you are here, you feel like a second class citizen. And you don't feel happy. *We are the people neither here nor there.*'

Asians feel they are not accepted by most of the English in Britain. They are socially excluded by mainstream society and become the underclass (Rex 1986; Wacquant and Wilson 1989).

Aneil: 'There is so much legislation against discrimination and this and that. That's okay on a piece of paper. But when you come to action, reality, you cannot change people's hearts. What do English people feel really down in their hearts? I know the facts. One of our friends is a school teacher, Bachelor in Science, MSc. in computing. And she can't find a job.'

Due to their awareness of racial discrimination in the labour market, some blacks retreat into their own sub-cultures and develop negative attitudes towards their position in the labour market and the official agencies supposed to help them (Cashmore and Troyna 1982; Roberts et al. 1982; Ullah 1985). Ethnic minorities are further excluded in the labour market by the labelling effect of their 'alien' religion. Aneil found that, being a Muslim, he faced a double discrimination because mainstream society stigmatises Islam.

Aneil: 'We being Asian is one of the problems. Second is being Muslim. Because I find that when they ask about religion, you say you are Muslim, people normally tend to think you are one of the fundamentalists. There is a war going on in Iraq. We are nationally harassed here. When people go for a job, they find that when you say you are Muslim, then that is it.'

Black is Beautiful

While the 'marginal man' debate assumes that most minority ethnic men and women aspire to integrate into mainstream society, many of my informants clearly wished to retain their own identity and were proud of their origins. Anna (UK16, F/34, Afro-Caribbean), an Afro-Caribbean woman among the various black communities in Britain, held a positive view of her black identity.

Anna: 'I've got British citizenship, but I call myself Jamaican. It's like a lot of people refer to me as "coloured". I used to say, "No, I'm not coloured, I'm black." They just don't understand why I called myself black. *I am proud of myself and my identity. My roots are still there.* My ancestors were brought to Jamaica through slavery, but they escaped to the hills. They were never slaves. So, I respect that and I can relate to it. With that, I was thinking I have strong blood.'

The first and second generations of migrants not only identify themselves with their home countries, but also deliberately hope to transmit their identities to their offspring. They want their children to retain their home cultures, religions and languages. Joe (UK42, M/30, Afro-Caribbean) stressed the importance of conveying a positive image of black identity to his children.

Joe: 'I never want them to forget they are black. That's one thing. I never want them to be ashamed of being black. They have to be proud of what they are.'

Reproduction of a Counter Sub-Culture

Although the mainstream education system in Britain claims to be paying more attention to multi-cultural issues, the curriculum still neglects black culture and identity. As an alternative, the black Caribbean community established centres and groups to provide educational material on their own culture in order to build up a collective black identity. Being proud of her own black culture, Anna (UK16) was keen to let her children learn about black culture to know where their roots were.

Anna: '[The Afro-Caribbean Women Centre] has books and education material leaflets to educate the children about their culture: where they came from and where their roots are. And that really impresses me, because when I was growing up in England, I didn't know that black people existed before me.'

Furthermore, ethnic communities do not take 'black' identity merely as a cultural or historical project, but more importantly, a political project with contemporary relevance. Being black means that they would face racism in everyday life and they have to prepare to fight against it. Joe (UK42) stressed,

'As a black man, you should get you extra for the fight. Just to get something, you come up against racism everyday. I don't mean somebody will be shot, but you do come up against racism everyday. I'm not meaning the physical fight. It's saying no and challenging them.'

Family

To retain their own identity and culture, ethnic workers transmit their cultural heritage through significant social institutions – family and community. Most Asian parents prefer their children to learn their own language and culture, and to retain their own religion so that the next generation can recognise their own roots. As a Muslim, Aneil (UK41) was keen to retain his mother language and religion in his own family.

Aneil: 'I think that having roots is very good. Knowing your ancestors is very important. It is very important for us to teach our children and also every time to take them back to Pakistan. To show them, this is where we come from. The language, I feel, is very important as well. At home, we speak our own language.'

Community

In Wolverhampton, the Asian community retains an atmosphere of intimacy, friendliness and mutual help among themselves. Manjit (UK22, M/47, Indian) is an active organiser within this traditional Asian community. Manjit described how their community is devoted to providing a meeting place for social activities and to setting up a Sunday school for transmitting their culture to their fellow youth.

Manjit: 'We just meet at somebody's home. We have a temple and a recreation centre there. Usually we meet there. Young students come down usually, talking about problems with them. Every Saturday morning, Sunday morning, there's a couple of teachers who teach them Punjabi.'

Religion

Jacobson (1997) suggests that being a Muslim and a Pakistani provides 'dual and alternative sources of identity' among young British Pakistanis. Aneil (UK41), a Muslim, explained how he was socially excluded for being a Muslim.

Aneil: 'Being Muslim, you cannot completely mix with the white English people. People do not eat certain food like pork and drink wine, when you go to a gathering for function or something. I, myself, I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't eat pork. Therefore, when I go there, they feel that I'm not mixing in. Because I'm not mixing in, I tend to be left unattended.'

Still, Aneil insisted that his children should learn the teachings of Islam and become faithful Muslims.

Aneil: 'We do send our children to the evening class. They go to the Mosque. We've got a teacher. He is sitting at 6 to 8 everyday, not on Friday. Also reading Koran in English, so that they understand far better. My children enjoy it.'

Reconciliation: An Alternative

Feminist perspectives suggest that women do not struggle to invert the power relationship between the dominating male and the dominated female, but rather to re-create a new kind of power relationship so that both men and women would respect each other.² This view is echoed by black consciousness. Black consciousness does not only mean a reversed social closure against whites, but also an alternative relationship which emphasises understanding and friendship between blacks and whites. Joe (UK42) was proud of his black consciousness, and he stated that he did not just want to share it with black youth but also with white youth. He fought racism by persuading white youths to understand black people and breaking down the wall between black and white people.

Joe: 'I ought to educate the white youngster, let them know about black people. Because of the way I am, some of the white people find it hard to approach me. If I'm from a youth group or whatever, they tend to come over and ask you something. You break the ice. I'm happy to talk to them so that they don't get the one side view of black people. If you seriously sit down, think about walls. Nobody needs it.'

² As suggested by Brimstone (1991), the feminists would not want to come out of the margins and into the centre, the mainstream, but to eradicate subordination altogether.

The Consciousness of Migrants in Hong Kong

On the whole, the ethnic consciousness of Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong is less articulated and weaker than that of British black people. Over 98 per cent of the population in Hong Kong, including the new immigrants, are Chinese. Most of them come from nearby *Guangdong* province, and are mainly *Han* in their ethnic origin. The new immigrants share the same appearance, culture, religion and language of the local population. It is, therefore, difficult for the Chinese new immigrants to develop a strong counter consciousness like that of black people in Britain, which stems from 'racial differences' between black and white.

Clansmen Association in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, most new Chinese immigrants share the same characteristics as earlier migrants. Chinese migrants did not organise themselves to cultivate a counter-culture against the mainstream like their counterparts in Britain. In Hong Kong, the most notable organisation of these Chinese migrants in the 1950s and 1960s were the clansmen associations, which were organised among migrants from the same province, townships or even the same villages. Sinn (1997) states that these regional associations or clansmen associations have acted as a 'bonding' mechanism which sustains a native place consciousness as well as reinforcing a regional loyalty.

The major function of these clansmen associations in the 1950s and 1960s was economic rather than cultural. New migrants depended on the association for shelter as well as job information. Ong (HK07, M/55,

Chinese) migrated to Hong Kong in 1948 when he was 19 years old. He had no place to live while his mother stayed in a relative's home.

Ong 'Then I searched for a place to stay. Finally, I made it. I discovered the clansmen association. I stayed in the association. I assembled the bed at night and took it down in the morning. The rent was about ten dollars a month. I got no job. They were my clansmen. They saw that I did not have a job, so they recommended that I carry mud. Nevertheless, I was not strong enough to carry the mud. I should not have had the chance, but some kind-hearted people asked me to do.'

Some resourceful clansmen associations or regional associations even set up schools in the 1960s and 1970s. These schools served the children of their own members. However, these schools employed the same curriculum and language of teaching as other schools in Hong Kong. They have not provided a base for a counter culture or ethnically-centred consciousness as in the British case. Furthermore, most of these schools then received subventions from the government and subsequently lost their autonomy. These clansmen associations in Hong Kong have facilitated the integration and incorporation of new migrants into the local Hong Kong Chinese community.

Some writers argue that the 'refugee' background of migrants in Hong Kong produced a pro-status quo mentality that became a source of political stability (Wong 1986). I suggest that it is not the refugee *per sé* that induced a pro-status quo mentality, it was the refugees' experiences of life and struggle that limited their consciousness. While most of the first generation of post-war immigrants fled from the Japanese invasion and the Civil War, others

fled Communist China because they belonged to the 'black five categories' (landlord, wealthy, reactionary, residual and right-wing), the 'class enemies' in Maoist China. Therefore, 'war refugees' demanded a stable and peaceful environment to rebuild their lives and 'political refugees' demanded a politically stable atmosphere. Both groups of migrants thus tended to have a conservative, pro status quo, mentality.

In the 1960s, the second wave of Chinese immigrants who entered Hong Kong were mainly 'economic' migrants escaping from the starvation and economic hardship following the Great Leap Forward in China. Many of them were ordinary peasants and workers who 'sneaked' into Hong Kong for survival rather than political stability. This background and experience of hardship created a strong instrumental and survival consciousness among them. They took whatever jobs were available in order to survive and then worked diligently to climb out of poverty. Mui (HK05, F/44, Chinese) sneaked from China into Macau in 1960, when she was 17 years old. Mui explained why she had to accept whatever the employer offered.

Mui: 'I was the only one to follow my uncle by going to Macau. After we had just arrived at Macau, there was a person who came on board and asked me to be a housemaid. My uncle came with his whole family. Well, I would be their burden if I relied on them. So when people came to hire me, I then accepted immediately. It was only 15 dollars per month. Even if there had been no salary but just accommodation, still I would have accepted. I was a refugee.'

However, the overseas Chinese from other countries tell a different story. Jan (HK10, F/49, Chinese), who migrated from Vietnam to Hong

Kong in the early 1960s, recalled that the life experience in Vietnam made her a strong minded person who is not afraid of power.

Jan: 'I grew up in a very complicated environment. I lived on a vegetable farm in Vietnam, where I witnessed lots of killing, fighting, and gambling and so on. I thought I grew up to have the thinking of righteousness. Until now, I never fear the triad. I'm not afraid of a strong power. I never fear.'

Therefore, not all refugees are apolitical or pro status quo. They develop their consciousness from their historical development and their experience of struggle in their home country. Another important factor for determining one's ethnic consciousness, is the degree of 'difference' of one's ethnic group distinct from mainstream society. While Chinese new immigrants do not have a distinctive ethnic consciousness, Filipino maids in Hong Kong possess an acute awareness of their ethnic position, which enhances a strong ethnic consciousness among them. Flora (HK01, F/35, Filipino) insisted that although she found the Philippines a poor country, she should not forget where she came from.

Flora: '[The Philippines] is your own country. You know some Filipinos are even staying in the US or in Canada. They say something so it seems they are no longer Filipinos, because they just go abroad. So I just said to all my friends, "Must be very careful. If you have a lot of money, maybe you forget your own country."'

In Flora's subtle consciousness, discrimination she experienced among mainstream Chinese society made her demand that she should be treated fairly as a human, rather than being discriminated against as a Filipino. This

disguised 'colour-blindness' argument, however, shows in another way that Filipinos are not treated as humans by mainstream Chinese.

Flora: 'We are just pitied, because on Sundays we just stay to one side, on one corner on the road and then eat. We must have some other place to stay, to meet. At first the government allowed us to work here, so you must have fair treatment. And that's because of human reasons. No need to think of, say, you are not Chinese, you are just Filipinos. Just think they are human. That's the reason.'

The minority position of Filipino maids in Hong Kong is a product of their 'guest worker' status. Since their own families are in the Philippines they came to live in scattered employers' residences, they live and work without the social institutions of family, community, and factory which many black marginal workers in Britain have access to. It is hard for Filipino maids to develop a strong base for a counter consciousness.

Furthermore, the religious beliefs of an ethnic minority may not induce a counter-culture against the mainstream, but rather facilitate a conformity instead. Most Filipino maids in Hong Kong are devout Catholics. Christianity, in this case, unlike the case of Islam for Pakistanis in Britain, becomes a means of pacification. Christianity provides consolation for the hard work and loneliness of Filipino maids. Being a Catholic, Flora considered that it was her mission to show goodness to her employers.

Flora: 'Maybe like some Filipinos, who are working in those countries which are not especially not Catholic, like the Middle East, it is always our mission to show our goodness. Because we just show goodness to our employer. It shows our faith and belief. It's already a mission.'

In conclusion ethnic minorities in both Britain and Hong Kong display a counter consciousness towards mainstream society. However, ethnic minorities in Britain are more socially encapsulated and isolated than the Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong. In this context British marginal workers have developed a more articulated counter consciousness.

Gender Consciousness

Other than ethnicity, gender is another significant sorting mechanism which serves to assign women to their marginal class position. Phizacklea (1988) suggests that we should not apply the logic of capital in understanding the employment profiles of black women in the British labour market. I agree partly with this argument but would argue that racism and sexism combine in confining black women to uniquely subordinated positions prior to their entry into the labour market. Facing male domination and exploitation in the family and workplace, women marginal workers develop their own gender identity and distinct female consciousness in the workplace, in the family and in society.

Independent Caribbean Women

In Chapter 5, I have pointed out that black Caribbean women have the highest labour participation rate among all the ethnic female groups, while black Caribbean men have the highest unemployment rate. This pattern of class position among Caribbean women and men runs contrary to

the normal 'male bread winner' pattern of the white family. I have also shown that many black women prefer to remain single.

This vividly different class position of the Caribbean women may have been bequeathed from the historical formation of gender relations in West Indian slave societies. In the colonial plantation system, owners prevented family unions between male slaves and their families. It became the women's responsibility to raise and provide for any ensuing children. As a result, Caribbean women are accustomed to acting as independent decision makers and household heads, and determine their own fate (Robinson 1993).

In addition, Byron (1994) argues that migration to Britain has further empowered Caribbean women, who are now more able to participate in and succeed in the labour market. Therefore, the historical gender formation and the better economic position of the black Caribbean female shapes a more independent relationship so that they can choose whether to have male partners or not. Dorothy (UK35, F/41, Afro-Caribbean) explained that as she wanted to be independent, she preferred to be single than married.

Dorothy: 'They [Caribbean men] look for more stability from women. So women already have an apartment, have it nice, and may be sure get a friendship with somebody. He'll want to move in, and then when he has enough, he'll move out...The black woman is more independent. They are more stable. They'll get jobs. They'll maintain whereas fellows would move around.'

Dorothy even accused Caribbean men of being lazy and this reinforced her desire to be independent.

Dorothy: 'Some of them don't like to work, because, I think, is laziness. Because they feel, if you got a stable women, you've got a good job, why do you bother yourself about working? Some of them got that attitude. When I meet those men, I'd rather be independent on my salary and do what I do. I bought a house and a car on my salary. So, if I'm looking for a man, I'm looking for love and upward mobility. I have not taken somebody who is not working, it would waste my time.'

Dorothy thought that it was a historical practice in the Caribbean for women to have the authority to run the family, but men did not want to make decisions.

Dorothy: 'I think, West Indian women seem to be the prominent people who run the family. The women always keep the finances of the household. The father goes out for work, but the woman got everything; the men don't make the authority decisions.'

This dialogue with Dorothy confirms that the main problems perceived by black single mothers are that their children's fathers do not provide them with enough or even any financial, practical or emotional support (Song and Edwards 1997). However, when I referred the above comments to a black Caribbean male, Joe (UK42), he did not agree with the above view. He argued that unemployment was not the black man's fault. Joe considered that the upside-down pattern of the gender positions between the black male and female was the result of racism.

Joe: 'It's not the black man's fault, when the girls see them in that position. If the girl said, "I can't find a black man who's got a steady job, a reliable income or whatever." It's not the black man's fault. It's really because he can't get a job to give the girl the security she wants. He is more inclined to feel "Bla Bla Bla" himself, not being able to do that. Although it might be hard, he might be able to do that. Go out to work, come home and put money on the table; be buying a house, a car and all that kind of thing. It is not enough that anyone along the line, the chance to do that, because of racism.'

Among black women workers, Caribbean women develop a more articulated gender consciousness than Asian women in Britain. I would suggest that the gender consciousness developed from their more complete 'proletarianisation' process. Caribbean women display the highest economic participation rate among all ethnic groups of women. Moreover, the labour market data also suggests that Caribbean women hold a more advantageous and economically independent positions than the Caribbean males (refer to Chapter 5). Asian women, especially Pakistani and Bangladeshi women who usually work as unpaid family workers in small family businesses, are only quasi-proleterianised and remain economically dependent and under their husbands' control. They do not achieve as high a level of economic independence shown by the Caribbean women.

My evidence thus support the argument that gender consciousness is not only constructed out of the gender location of the individual but also embedded in the wider class location of the individual black woman workers. This supports Westergaard's (1996) idea that gender and ethnic inequality operates in large measure through class inequality in the public sphere.

The Sisterhood of Hong Kong Women Workers

In Hong Kong, gender consciousness against male domination does not exist only in the family like the black Caribbean women in Britain, but also in society and in the workplace. Women workers show a strong 'sisterhood' in organising mutual-help networks to resist male domination in society and in the workplace.

I Am Not a Plaything

Watson (1994) suggests that when the women of the *Zhujiang* Delta left their rural homes and migrated to Hong Kong and southeast Asia, they took with them certain institutions, beliefs and patterns of behaviour. The all-spinster-houses provided women workers not only an alternative to the fear of patriarchal bondage, but also a gathering place for festival celebrations and a shelter from poverty, poetic laments and illiteracy. They provided arenas of resistance against male domination among the first generation of women workers in post-war Hong Kong.³

Concomitant with industrialisation in Hong Kong, the second generation of working women usually worked in the rising manufacturing sector. Unlike their parents' generation, they freed themselves from having to work as *mui tsai* (young maid) or from having to get married as a child bride or concubine like their mothers and grand-mothers used to in the *Zhujiang* Delta. In the 1960s and the 1970s, with the increasing employment

³ Please refer to the case of Eight (HK11), the spinster maid, introduced in Chapter 6.

opportunities, they fought against the traditional identity of being a 'property', a 'subordinate' of their fathers or husbands. Economic independence enables these working women to stand on their own feet and resist the temptation of being a plaything of men.

Yee's (HK06) mother was a concubine, a second wife with a subordinated status in the family. Yee was single when she migrated to Hong Kong in the early 1970s. She was young and beautiful, so she was tempted by her friends to join the film industry. Yee, however, refused to be a 'plaything' of men.

Yee 'People would look down upon those concubines like my mother, who was silly and then could not stand upright. I thought that I could not make my Mama be ashamed of me for the purpose of earning more money. It's easy for you to be a plaything for someone. They would desert you a few years later, then one would have nothing. I always reminded myself of it. *Don't be a plaything.*'

The Sisterhood of Chinese Women Workers

Hong Kong women not only encounter traditional male domination in society; but also male dominance in the workplace, especially through the technological division of labour in the production process. Most women in manufacturing industry are segregated into unskilled jobs, while men occupy management positions and skilled technical positions for set up and maintenance of machines. As most shop-floor workers are paid by piece-work, women workers depend on the goodwill of male mentors to repair the broken machines so that they can earn more income or maintain a stable income.

However, women manufacturing workers in Hong Kong are not powerless in facing male domination in the workplace. Among the working 'sisters', a certain kind of gender consciousness – 'sisterhood' developed. Honig (1986) describes women workers in a Shanghai cotton mill who developed a strong degree of sisterhood, which reflects a woman's need for mutual aid and protection in daily life, residence, and work. Developing a network of 'sisters' – a group of other women workers one can depend on for help – is part of the growing up experience of female workers in the Shanghai cotton mills as well as the small manufacturing workshops in Hong Kong. Sankar (1984) further suggests that the basic structure of the sisterhood first developed among marriage resisters and it survived and was transplanted from southern China to Hong Kong.

In Hong Kong sisterhood enabled women manufacturing workers to organise as a small production unit or a small informal network to resist both capital exploitation and male domination. As a group, the sisters shared information about pay levels in different factories. In addition, they collectively withdrew their labour from low-paid factories and 'hopped' together to higher-paid ones. However, capital also tried to utilise sisterhood to facilitate their control over women workers. From my case studies, I also discovered that sisterhood has also offered women workers mutual support and confidence in technical skills, which helped them to challenge the stereotype that women are neither capable of nor interested in handling machines.

The Guerrilla: A Small Production Gang

Most of the employers in the Hong Kong manufacturing industry consider wage manipulation to be the main factor in labour control. Therefore, they adopt the piece-rate system both to motivate the workers to work harder and to create an informal relation with employees to habituate them in production (Sit 1989).

To live with this piece-rate system, workers move around factory to factory from low-wage firms to those paying higher wages. Women workers in Hong Kong form small and flexible production units and move around various enterprises in search of better pay, a better supply of work and working conditions. Hong Kong women workers, with the help of fellow sisters, express the logic of 'escape' by escaping from the employers' over-exploitation with an extremely high mobility. Sisterhood thus provides the necessary psychological and substantial help for women workers to resist the exploitation of capital.

In the 1960s, Sau (HK03), Jan (HK10) and Yee (HK06) got to know each other while they worked together, stitching doll hair in a very small doll factory. All the workmates became close friends and they helped each other in finishing the jobs. They worked together happily, sticking together as they moved from one factory to another. Their network enabled them to feel mutual support and solidarity. Besides pay, these working daughters revealed that sisterhood was the second most important factor in determining job switching

Yee: 'At times, we worked as 'guerrillas' (doing casual jobs and changing jobs often). In low seasons, we worked as guerrillas. We worked in this factory for a few days and then in the other for the other days. We ran here and there. Then we, Sau, Jan and I became the "Three Musketeers".'

Social Support

This network of sisters also provides social support, friendship and leisure activities for its fellow sisters. When there was no work in the daytime owing to shortages of raw materials, Sau, Jan and Yee enjoyed themselves by making the best use of their 'free' time. They watched films or went swimming at the beach. Yee also recalled that the friendship with Sau and Jan provided the compassion she never received from her own family.

Against Male Domination in the Workplace

Solidarity among 'sisters' provides not only social support and acquaintances, but also enables them to challenge male domination in the workplace. At that time, all the mentors for the maintenance of the sewing machines were male. The male mentors tried to retain their skills and tricks. They would definitely never teach women sewers to repair the machine, not even for minor problems.

Jan: 'If the sewing machine was out of order, you had to call the mentor. The mentor came, but he'd be afraid that you would learn from him. He'd ask you to bring the screwdriver, and then the hammer, and so on. You had to walk to and fro several times. And then, he told you that's alright. He had finished. We thought that it's a waste of time. Then we brought all the tools at one time. We hoped that we could learn how to mend the machine secretly. But, he'd move his body so that we could not see what he was doing, what was going on. But luckily, we still managed to learn some secretly.'

On one occasion, a machine broke down all of a sudden. It stopped completely. Without asking for help from the mentors, Jan, Sau and Yee decided to repair the machine by themselves. They disassembled the whole machine and examined each part piece by piece. They were so devoted to concentrating on the task that they did not even have any food for lunch. They worked on the broken machine from the morning until the afternoon. Finally they found a loose screw and managed to mend the sewing machine. It worked again solely because of their own effort.

Jan: 'I was greatly impressed by this experience. I thought I got some sense of achievement. If Sister Sau and we were not so devoted to the repairing, we would not have such an achievement. Then, whenever there were problems again, we'd solve them easily. It's very important for our future development.'

Capital Uses Sisterhoods to Control Women Workers

To respond to their high mobility, the employers depended on the supervisors' command of shop-floor workers to retain a stable number of mobile workers. Instead of a stable work force, the employers prefer a group of more or less core but mobile workers. As a result, supervisors always form informal networks with shop-floor workers moving around different factories. They control workers both by allocating good or bad jobs to his/her fellow workers in a discretionary way and cultivating friendships with fellow workers to solicit voluntary co-operation.

Control by Relationship Building

Hong Kong employers do not exercise control by close supervision or technology in the production process. They rely, however, on the

relationship between the supervisors and their fellow workers. Since the supervisors themselves are often promoted from the shop-floor, they have indirectly been leading small gangs of workers.

Jan (HK10) was promoted from the shop-floor to become a supervisor. Jan learnt that a good relationship with her fellow workers was the key to success in managing her section of workers. She recruited her relatives and friends to build up a good team spirit. Jan believed that to achieve effective management, she had to solicit consent and co-operation among the workers in the production process.

Jan: 'If you cannot get a powerful team, you'd find it very difficult to work. Because the orders cannot be finished by you yourself alone, you need workers to finish them. If you cannot manage effectively, the workers won't be obedient, and then your position would be shaken.'

Jan spelled out how she tactically allocated jobs between her relatives and other workers. Contrary to the common assumption, she did not allocate easy jobs to her relatives. Rather, she did it in the opposite way to win the support of other workers. Her tactic helped her to succeed in forming a core group of workers.

Jan: 'It's my department. I always gave those difficult jobs to my sister-in-law. Everyone got an order, but I'd give those difficult ones to my sister-in-law and share the rest of the orders with the others. In this way, the workers wouldn't disagree. They knew that it was not my relatives who earned a lot but they earned little. It's normal. The most important thing is that you work in a comfortable way. Workers and the management level would find it easy to work.'

As shown in this example, the female supervisor's use of sisterhood and family relations becomes an important labour control strategy. When personal interest merges with the interest of management, both supervisors and workers cooperate in a 'comfortable' or harmonious way. This cooperation therefore becomes an obstacle to the development of a counter and radical consciousness against the management as characterised by British marginal workers.

In conclusion, the 'sisterhood' of Hong Kong women workers stresses the mutual help of women in production and social life. Compared with the 'aggressive' feminist consciousness of the black Caribbean women in Britain, this 'sisterhood' of Hong Kong women is defensive. Caribbean single mothers are determined to stay single rather than live with male partners. They display an 'aggressive' gender consciousness in terminating male domination in the family. As shown in the case of machine repairing, Hong Kong sisters do not terminate male domination in the workplace as they do not intend to become female maintenance mentors. Their action was defensive only. Nevertheless, gender consciousness may have contradictory effects on class consciousness as sisterhood simultaneously induces resistance to as well as acceptance of the exploitation of capital.

Class Consciousness

Psychological Traits of Marginal Workers

Freedom and Status

In Britain, capital sub-divides the production process into a series of unskilled tasks to increase management's control over workers in the labour process. Such technical control requires close technical supervision. These Taylorist and Fordist production techniques continually intensify the alienation of the workers from the production process. At the same time, close supervision in the labour process has paradoxically induced a counter-consciousness among marginal workers who resist close supervision and monitoring. Workers express an urge for both 'freedom and status'. For freedom they want to free themselves from the close supervision of management; whereas the yearning for status indicates that they demand self-respect and respect from fellow workers. Both Marco (UK15, M/40, Italian) and Mohammed (UK04) enjoyed the freedom and status of being a driver.

Marco had previously worked in many factories. He enjoyed 'freedom' as a bus driver since he was not as closely supervised as a factory worker. The driving job gave him his own responsibilities.

Marco: 'I enjoyed working in the bus. When I took a bus out, I was in charge of the bus; I was responsible for the bus. That gave me some kind of status, freedom. Okay, I was tied to a timetable, to a certain route, but nobody tried to tell me the way I was driving the bus. And, nobody was behind my back and saying you are going too slow, you are going too fast. That was my responsibility.'

Moreover, the perception of freedom and responsibility made Marco think that his occupational status was higher than that of ordinary factory workers. Many white people in Coventry consider driving to be a low status occupation while they work in the motor industry. As a result, most bus drivers come from ethnic minorities. Marco, however, rejected this perspective. He was of the opinion that when he is driving a bus, he is 'responsible' for and is 'in charge' of the labour process.

Marco: 'For my side, it wasn't just production that making things blindly. Yes, some kind of self-respect. I was realising well my status wasn't higher than the factory worker. In society, it was lower; but with myself, I think higher.'

Mohammed (UK04) reiterated Marco's view because he rejected his past experience of being a factory hand, who is closely supervised on the shop-floor, and enjoyed the status of being a 'professional' driver – who works independently without close supervision.

Mohammed: 'I cannot go back. If they ask me to go back to the factory, it's like a rope around my neck. It is impossible for me to work in a factory. I don't like to be in a factory, because you get used to the atmosphere, the predominantly fresh air of driving.'

For British marginal workers, freedom implies freedom from close supervision, whereas marginal workers in Hong Kong have different aspirations for freedom and status. Management in Hong Kong does not control workers through close supervision, but mainly through piece-rate wages and the discretionary allocation of jobs. Production workers are even allowed to talk and listen to the radio. Under different forms of control, in the eyes of Hong Kong workers, the quest for freedom means that they can

change employers freely. Sau (HK03) elucidated that she enjoyed her freedom to move around different factories, although her family burden demanded a stable income

Sau: 'May be because I felt it was boring, stitching doll's hair for four years and I found the working environment boring too. By going to different factories, I got a new exposure. In this way, I changed from one small factory to another one. I still chose to be a freeman. Even though I had to be responsible for my family's household expenditure, I usually worked in a factory for just one to two years.'

For marginal workers in Hong Kong, status means they are concerned about respect from the employers rather than the perception of other workers. Tai (HK12, F/81, Chinese) enjoyed restaurant work more than being a housemaid. She claimed that being a maid meant she had a lower status and was always 'watching the boss's face'.

Tai: 'However, to me, the most important thing is whether I have to watch the boss's face. I can't bear the employer's bad temper. I would not mind working from morning till evening, but I would mind people making faces.'

Fairness

Under the piece-rate system, manufacturing workers in Hong Kong are sensitive to a specific kind of 'fairness' – the fairness in the allocation of jobs among workers. Although Sau (HK03) was just a child when she began working, she still could not accept the unfair treatment in job allocation.

Sau: 'I was very young and I had to face so many adults. They'd blame you that you were not working, or you worked slowly, or you selected work. They allocated the most difficult work to me. I felt very unhappy, thus I stopped working in that factory after a month's time.'

While marginal workers in Hong Kong are seriously concerned about fairness in the allocation of jobs, British marginal workers expect a 'fair day's pay' for a 'fair day's work'. Moreover, British marginal workers demand a dignified job as well as a decent job. 'A fair day's pay for a fair day's work' is the basic rule of a decent job. Mark (UK30), a long-term unemployed middle-aged man in Britain, demanded a decent job with fair pay.

Mark: 'I'll do anything with reasonable pay. I don't want to be pushed into a job. I know what job is right for me, what the job is I'm looking for. I am not very happy about a low-paid job.'

Dignity

To cope with everyday oppression and exploitation, most marginal workers follow the rules of the game. Nonetheless, they neither adapt unconditionally to the jungle-like environment nor lose their esteemed values and faiths. They retain a yardstick in their soul to measure what is acceptable and what is not. Marginal workers cherish the 'dignity' of life as an important value, which provides emotional and spiritual support for them to face the rigours of working life.

Hong Kong marginal workers assert the dignity of work and resist taking up jobs which are socially denounced. Once when Jan (HK10) was unemployed and very poor, she was determined in refusing to stick mahjong or to become a prostitute, 'bad jobs' from her viewpoint.

Jan: 'Really, at that time, I could only earn one dollar a day, fifteen dollars one term. It's very frustrating. An aunt suggested that I go to stick mahjong. Well, sticking mahjong was trendy work at that time. But, in Vietnam, prostitution, gambling, etc are prohibited. These things were rejected. I replied, "I hate people gambling. You ask me to do this job. That means you are teaching me to do bad things." She said, "You refuse this and that. In Hong Kong, people will look down on the poor but not the prostitutes. Then, I think you should try to work as a prostitute." I said, "As my ancestor, you talk to me in this way. Look. I won't be the one what you think."'

In Hong Kong marginal workers regard the 'dignity' of work as the ability to work and live as a human being, not an animal. Dignity means that they receive fair treatment no matter what their gender and ethnicity are. Once, when Yee was hungry in the factory where she worked, she refused to eat the leftover food which had just been prepared for the male workers. Furthermore, clinging to her desire for dignity, she refused to beg for help from her uncle.

Yee: 'It was a typhoon signal number eight. I had no food to eat. The cook was the wife of the boss. Her niece, like me, also came from Mainland China. On that day, she did not cook for us, but only for the male workers. Only when the male workers did not want the food, she asked us to have it. Her niece had it, but I didn't. I was so headstrong. I went to borrow money from my uncle. There's a strong wind and heavy rain. I took an umbrella and went there. I asked my uncle to lend me ten dollars. He said, "No. No." I did not beg him. Neither did I ask him once more. I turned my head away. That's my first time, starving all the day. I starved, I shivered.'

British marginal workers view dignity in work differently that one should not work to help capital or the state to exploit other workers. Stephen (UK07), a long-term unemployed Irishman in Britain, declared that he would not help the state to exploit others.

Stephen: 'Last year, I could supply a story to a newspaper, which might earn me £5000. But, it conflicted with my belief, so I rejected it. But, it's a hard choice. The nature of the story was about two lesbians adopting two children. I do know the person in the story. I know it's a good story. I stopped. It may attract the social services department. I won't help the employers to screw me.'

Both marginal workers in Britain and Hong Kong are looking for dignity in their work. However, dignity signifies a different consciousness. While Hong Kong marginal workers views dignity in work as self respect and the respect of others in a individualistic and sensational manner, British marginal workers consider dignity at work in a more class-related way as not exploiting others and having a decent wage.

Socialist Ideas

Despite diverse interpretations, socialism provides a source of alternative hopes for some marginal workers. In Britain, workers develop their faith in socialism from the oppression or injustice they encounter in their everyday lives. Through socialism, they hope to obtain a fairer share of the fruits of production, a more humane and just social system. In contrast, socialism in Hong Kong carries a slightly different meaning. Socialism is interwoven with nationalism and patriotism, in particular, Maoism rather than Marxism, to influence the thought and actions of leftist labour activists.

Italian Communist

Marco's working experience in the factories and bus companies led him to rethink socialism as a human-oriented system rather than an abstract

theoretical system. Marco (UK15) was born in Sicily, Italy and he migrated to Coventry in 1973 when he was just 18. As a migrant worker, Marco developed a more international perspective of socialism than the average English worker.

Marco: 'I'm interested in the political development world-wide especially in nations where discrimination and the repression of people are very much alive. Of course, I pay attention particular to those nations that I wish things will change and the working class and the population are raised. I have always been a socialist. I always thought it will become a fairer society where discrimination would vanish, when the needs of the population are all taken care of, and a fairer share of the wealth is produced.'

Besides having socialist ideals, Marco also supports the views of the Green and Feminist movements.

Marco: 'I think that future development world-wide will determine how long life will be for us. Of course, I support the Green Movement, their ideal, not necessarily the way they are going about to achieve it. I also agree with the feminist view and agree with men and women being equal.'

Marco had been in the Labour Party for more than ten years. He took part in fund-raising, legislation debates, and also labour struggles, like the miners' strike. However, Marco was disappointed about the recent changes in the Labour Party, which compelled him to virtually quit.

Marco: 'I disagree with their changes very much with the Labour Party. It has abandoned the traditional socialist idea it originally had. People cannot see much difference between the Tory Party and the Labour Party. In terms of problems, they haven't got a clear solution to put forward or a solution people can understand or can relate to, especially working class people.'

David

Like other activists in Britain, David developed his ideas of socialism through his experiences on the shop-floor, rather than from books or theories. David (UK46, M/47, Welsh) is working as an English teacher in a college of further education in Coventry. He has actively participated in both trade unions and the Labour Party for the last 30 years. He developed his working class consciousness as early as the age of 16. The injustice he met in the workplace provoked him to ask questions.

David: 'In 1964, I was working in a shipping yard. It was my first job to calculate the wages of dock workers for the amount of goods they had loaded or unloaded ...what happened was the way the place was organised, a very hierarchical place to work. I just began to ask questions. I thought to myself surely this is not life.'

David discovered that dock workers worked very hard to load and then unload the dirty and heavy cargo. Not only did they suffer accidents at work, they were also laid off easily when there was not enough work about.

David: 'I began to ask questions. There was a member in the union where I was working who said to me, "You should join the Young Socialists." which I joined in October 1964. That coincided with the first Labour government since 1951. It was a critical change in the government. I was changing my consciousness, so I was able to begin to ask questions. I attended socialist meetings then. People stood up and talked about theory and ideas I never heard before. They talked about Marxism. They talked about class struggle, exploitation, what value and surplus value were and relative and absolute surplus value.'

Socialist ideas provide the driving force among leaders of marginal workers in both Britain and Hong Kong to fight against capitalist

domination. Socialist ideas are virtually a combination of a long-lasting motivation, a mission and a vision. However, what is the essence of Socialism? A Hong Kong trade unionist gives a very different answer from that of his British counterpart.

Wo, the Patriotic

Interpretation of socialism among the leftist trade union movement in Hong Kong is strongly influenced by the political interpretation of socialism of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Since the unions in Hong Kong are descended from the national trade union movement in China, they participated actively in the anti-imperial and anti-colonial movements led by the CCP. As a result, the left-wing union activists view the essence of socialism as anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism, an alternative to the colonial society in Hong Kong.

Wo (HK14, M/37, Chinese) was a self-employed painter and an active trade unionist in the Painters' Union, a member of the pro-Beijing Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (HKFTU). In 1967, under the influence of the Cultural Revolution in China, the HKFTU mobilised its members to take part in the 'Anti-colonialism, Counter-repression' struggle (in the HKFTU's terms), or alternatively known as the '1967 riot' according to the colonial government's definition. Wo joined the union at that time and actively participated in the struggle. However, like most of the other leftists at that time, instead of reading Marx Wo and his comrades merely read the writings of 'Chairman Mao'.

Wo: 'We mainly studied the writings of Chairman Mao. We seldom read articles written by Marx, Lenin or Stalin. Well, we'd glance through their readings quickly. We seldom focused on them. We, the working class, found that socialism was a kind of hope. Socialism is an ideal perfect society. Workers in the capitalist countries are being exploited. It's very unfair. It's also an unstable society. The workers living in socialist countries are able to be the masters of the country. These were what we believed in.'

Wo was not only a pragmatic socialist but also a faithful follower of the political line of the CCP. At the time of the interview, Wo was asked by his union to abandon his better-paid job as a renovation sub-contractor to take up a position as a full-time union officer. Based on his socialist beliefs of serving the lower class and the grassroots, Wo accepted the invitation as he preferred to spend more time and effort on union affairs

Wo: 'As a part of society, I should also try my hardest to serve the grassroots, labour and society. We should speak for the lower class and the grassroots. I find it meaningful. That's the main reason. Socialist thinking is the basic. You got the concept, but this is not enough. To me, it takes a very very long history for socialism to be achieved.'

Socialist ideals mean different things in both Britain and Hong Kong. In Britain, socialism means a class-based ideology to fight against the exploitation of capital, especially on the shop-floor level. Activists also incorporate new inputs from new social movements into an alternative socialist world order, in particular, the feminist and green movements. In contrast, socialism in Hong Kong only reflects the collective ideological base and practice of the CCP. The key component of the socialism of the CCP is nationalism (or more precisely patriotism), embedded in the historical context of anti-feudalistic, anti-imperial and anti-colonial struggles in China. To a

certain extent, activists who hold this definition of socialism do not develop a perspective towards capital in Hong Kong, especially national capital and small capital.⁴ The poverty of socialism in Hong Kong contributes to an amorphous class consciousness among activists as well as marginal workers in Hong Kong.

Summary

I have shown that both marginal workers in Britain and Hong Kong are critical of capitalist exploitation. They demand dignity, freedom and fairness in the production process and many activists in the union movement embrace the ideals of socialism. However, owing to the differences in labour process and tactics of labour control, their interpretations of dignity, freedom, and fairness vary significantly between marginal workers in these two regions.

The ethnic, gender and class consciousness of marginal workers in both Britain and Hong Kong demonstrates a counter, non-conforming and cynical consciousness towards oppression and exploitation by ethnicity, patriarchy and capital. I regard this consciousness as a 'critical consciousness'. Marginal locations of workers in the ethnic, gender and class structure generate a 'marginal consciousness'. All in all, this supports my original hypothesis that 'marginal is critical'.

⁴ For example, the 'new democratism' proposed by Mao, and 'the primary stage of socialism' proposed by Deng Xiao Ping show the ambiguous attitude of the CCP: struggle as well as co-operation towards capital.

Nevertheless, marginal workers in both regions vary significantly in the degree and extent of a marginal consciousness. While British marginal workers cultivate a more aggressive, radical and definite consciousness, Hong Kong marginal workers develop a more defensive, conservative and amorphous consciousness. This leads to the second question in this chapter: Have the consciousness and actions of marginal workers in the two regions generated different paths of class formation?

Marginal Class Formation in Britain and Hong Kong

Differences in class consciousness originate not only from the differences in the class locations between workers in Britain and Hong Kong at the micro level of class consciousness, but they are also mediated by class formation processes at the macro and meso levels.

Previously, I have compared and contrasted marginal class formation in Britain and Hong Kong. I contend that the 'sedimentary class formation' of marginal workers in Britain is structured by macro factors, like downward class mobility and the geographical immobility of some ethnic and gender groups. In the following, in addition to the macro factors, I will examine the meso factors: the experience of shop-floor struggle against management, and the trade unions as training camps in organising struggles, which are crucial in the class formation process of marginal workers in Britain.

Britain: Sedimentary Class Formation

Meso Level: The Experiences of Shop-floor Struggle

Besides class and geographical mobility, networks and organisations of marginal workers at the meso level also affect marginal class formation. Strong shop-floor trade unionism in Britain provides marginal workers with class-based, empowering experiences of solidarity struggles. Moreover, a shop-floor trade union is a school for training activists and organisers in marginal workers' movements as well as in wider social movements.

Action to End Ethnic Division

To change the existing ethnic division among workers, mass industrial action can create class solidarity and break down the barrier between different ethnic fractions of the workforce. I have argued in Chapter 5 that racism exists extensively in the workplace where management is keen on utilising ethnic divisions among workers as a divide and rule strategy. Ethnic divisions in the workplace are mainly embedded in the barriers of language and cultural differences among workers. Marco (UK15) described these differences in the multi-racial workforce in the West Midlands Bus Company. Marco said that, as they were, worker discrimination existed only at the level of verbal jokes.

Marco: 'Among that workforce, there were divisions. Divisions in the sense that the Irish tends to group with the Irish in the canteen. The Asians tends to group with Asians. But even within the Asians, there is a division there. The English discriminate against the Asian but the discrimination could not be carried out to any great extent. We are all workers, we are all doing the same job.'

Nevertheless, class solidarity can challenge, dissolve and remedy these minor ethnic divisions. Marco reported how hatreds and divisions between different ethnic groups in the West Midlands Bus Company vanished after an industrial action.

Marco: 'But all these dislikes, all these mild hatreds and divisions that existed during the ordinary working days virtually disappeared in times of struggle against management about a pay rise. A new atmosphere is created. The barriers that existed before are virtually broken. There is more talk and Indians, the Asians and white workers are talking together. That was all we were going to do. The management has tried to win over us but we all stick together.'

Moreover, the working class directed their solidarity not only against exploitation by capital, but also against racial discrimination and harassment in the community and the police. Marco recalled an incident when an Asian driver was beaten up by two white passengers on his last journey to the depot. Instead of rounding up the whites –who were the suspects, the police detained the Asian driver –who was the victim. Worse still, the police did not allow the driver to ring anybody. Finally, the driver was released about one o'clock in the morning and the police did not give him a lift or anything.

Marco: 'Obviously all these come back to us. I remember there is a meeting with the union. We discussed all these and said this was something that should not happen. And there again you find it really beautiful. White and Asian and Polish and everybody were in agreement that it was wrong. And we were out on a one-day strike. That strike was not for wages, was not for anything material. It was against discrimination and police harassment of the Asian driver. Unanimous decision in going with the strike. The strike was successful. A day of protest. Nobody works at all that day. It was a beautiful day.'

Solidarity struggles on the shop-floor facilitate and enhance the class formation of marginal workers and their ability to carry out struggles. At the same time solidarity struggles also transform their consciousness so that minor divisions between ethnic groups and racism in the workplace can disappear.

Pensioner Movement: Organisers and Experience from the Union Movement

Marginal workers have been actively engaged in collective action to simultaneously challenge ethnic, gender and class oppression. The experience and consciousness they learnt from the action can definitely be extended to other social movements. The experience of class struggle, especially the organising experience on the shop-floor related to trade union movement, has indeed provided marginal workers with important 'organising' resource for other movements which are not class-based.

Many pensioners, who actively participated in the pensioner movement, had been activists in the trade union movement. Both Jack (UK11, M/72, white) and Betty (UK13, F/67, white) were organisers of a pensioner movement – the Pensions Convention in Birmingham. At least 50 to 60 people met every month. They fought against the removal of the Free-Bus-Pass, campaigned against VAT on fuel, and struggled to keep pensioner benefits in line with those of other European countries. They were energetic and directed their campaigns against the adverse change in social policies, which threatened the rights of pensioners.

Jack, an ex-councillor member of the Labour Party, regarded the pensioner movement as a non-party based political movement. Many participants in the pensioner movement had been veteran trade unionists and labour activists, so their participation was essentially an extension of their social consciousness and class-consciousness awakened in the labour movement before they retired.

Jack: 'It is a social movement – the Pensions Convention. We have 10,000 members in West Midlands. Most of them are trade unionists and labour activists. They have a social conscience, which started at a very young age.'

The IWA Tactics: Standing up on the Shoulders of the Giant

On encountering both racial oppression and capitalist exploitation, black workers have difficulty in opposing them. Sometimes, however, they also organise themselves collectively in fighting against racial oppression and capital exploitation (Ramdin 1987; Sivanandan 1982). Nevertheless, black workers face a dilemma in deciding what organising strategy they should use, an individual or collective one.

Wrench and Virdee (1994) conclude that black worker groups hold three different positions in relating to mainstream unions. Firstly, the *black separatists* demand ethically-exclusive black organisations and black trade unions; secondly, those that advocate *incorporation* argue that the black groups should help their members to integrate into unions; and finally, those with a *race and class* perspective stress the potential of external groups to galvanise unions into more radical and political action.

The IWA(GB) has integrated these positions. It encourages their members to challenge racism inside trade unions by joining the mainstream trade union movement. This strategy attempts to build up solidarity with white workers and to utilise the greater power of the wider trade union movement. Concomitantly, the IWA(GB) also upholds another tactic by maintaining its autonomy as an independent black workers organisation. With these two tactics, the IWA can challenge racism both inside and outside the trade union movement. The experience of the IWA(GB) shows that it articulates both creatively.

The IWA(GB) was first established in 1938 to link workers of Indian origin with the trade union movement in Britain. It reaches out to recruit workers of Indian origin and encourages them to become members of trade unions in their respective trades or professions. Avtar Jouhal, Chairman of the IWA(GB) explained,

‘IWA can register itself into a trade union, but it will be an Indian workers trade union. There is no workplace that there is only Indian origin. So, therefore, it is not a practical situation. And, second, in terms of the resources in building members, IWA do not have the resource.’

The IWA(GB) influences the trade union movement by encouraging its members to participate actively in the trade union movement and influence union policy. In particular, it advocates that unions should combat racism more actively.

Avtar: '[The unions] have been changed. No unions support the deportation campaign. This is a shift of policy. For example, on the issue of asylum, TGWU and other unions are combining and form picket lines. So we have shifted the role of the union from supporting racism to the role where they directly intervene. So it is the major shift of influence.'

The IWA(GB) also promotes a more black leadership in the trade union movement. They argue for more seats for black people in the national executive committee of the TGWU and NUPE. They also lobby political parties and organisations on issues of anti-racism and human rights.

This incorporation strategy failed in the Grunwick and Burnsall strikes.⁵ However, the IWA(GB) developed an alternative approach by forming a united front with other organisations on an issue by issue basis. This allowed the IWA(GB) to retain its autonomy.

Avtar: 'I'm thinking of other organisations. They would like to organise themselves to fight against racism and fight against capitalism, rather than stress the need to influence the main stream union. More and more organisations are coming to the position that influence remains. For example, very widespread united front to fight racism. They can affiliate and they are bringing an important role. So, therefore, even more and more organisations are moving to politics, getting influence and at the same time not downgrading their own organisation.'

Therefore, the IWA(GB) has taken both institutional and non-institutional means to work within and alongside the mainstream trade union movement.

⁵ For details of the Grunwick strike in 1976, please refer to Rogaly (1977) and for the Burnsall strike, please refer to Wrench and Virdee (1994).

Avtar: 'It was not an easy work with the unions. There is still very much institutional racism. It is still under representation of black workers in the union movement. So, IWA's line is working within the union movement and also outside the union. Within the union, we have to work within the structures, within it all. Outside, we work with IWA structure, IWA rule, IWA political impact, building political pressure. That works out harmonious. It is like parliamentary and extra.'

The IWA(GB) not only focuses its struggle on class issues, but also forms united fronts with the Indian business sector on racial issues without losing its baseline as a working class organisation.

Avtar: 'Business people, like ordinary workers, their relatives come to this country. They are subjected to racist immigration control and many people have been subject to this. There is the common area of struggle. For example, in 1991 and 1995, when business was attacked on Soho Road, I and the IWA went to the forefront of the defence for the Indian community and other business on the Soho Road. That's sort of example which is a concept of a united front on an issue to issue base.'

Facing their oppressed class location in both the class and ethnic structure, the IWA(GB) utilises an active, flexible and united front strategy to fight the exploitation and oppression from capital and mainstream society. However, it tries to utilise the strength of the mainstream trade union movement to fight against class and ethnic oppressions. Literally the IWA(GB) stands on the shoulders of a strong historical trade union formation, helping marginal groups to forge a multiple strategy of separatism, incorporation, as well as other radical tactics.

In Hong Kong, on the contrary, without a strong union background, marginal groups do not have the choice of selecting between cooperation or

challenging the mainstream union movement. They are just able to maintain their own survival in form of small groups, which are independent of the mainstream union movement.

Hong Kong: A Disrupted Marginal Class Formation

In the following section, I will contend that the class formation of marginal workers in Hong Kong has been disrupted by the self-help tendency of the poor at the micro level and the lack of shop-floor union organisers and experience of struggle at the meso level.

Workers Network: Mutual Help Activities

Chen (1994) asserts that the mutual help network in Taiwan provides not only horizontal interaction channels, but also possibilities of vertical interaction. Therefore, workers and employers formed mutual help or self-reliance social and economic networks. These networks cut across the class division line between employers and employees. Contrary to Chen's argument, I suggest that the mutual help networks of the working class are indeed 'class' organisations, which are part and parcel of the working class formation. However, these workers' networks do not direct their struggle against capital, but provide mutual help among the working class, for survival and improvements in living conditions.

In Hong Kong, trade unions were prohibited by the colonial government in the 1920s and 1940s. Workers therefore organised themselves in 'disguised' working class organisations, like 'mutual help associations',

which provided help and support for unemployed workers. 'Recreation and study groups' provided cultural and social activities while the 'seven-sisters associations' provided social support for women workers. These mutual help associations later developed into various trade unions immediately after the colonial government relaxed its control on trade unions in the 1940s. The mutual help networks of workers were indeed the 'prototype' of trade unions. Although the clansmen associations also serve as a mutual help network, they were different in that they did not exclusively serve the working class. With the following example, I will describe an important mutual help network of workers — the *Yi Hui (Fraternity Credit Group)* — to support my claims.

The Poor People's Credit Union — Yi Hui (Fraternity Credit Group)

In the 1960s, workers in Hong Kong, following the Chinese workers' tradition, often formed *Yi Hui* (義會), a kind of workers' credit union, to meet the unexpected, acute financial need of individual members. After Mui (HK05, F/54, Chinese) became a sewer in the garment factory, she joined the *Yi Hui* organised by her supervisor.

Mui: 'I contribute twenty dollars a month. Then in one year, there should be two hundred and forty dollars, when it was completed. If someone drew money out from the pool before the term, then we'd get several dollars more. It's the interest. If you were the last one to draw money out, you had no need to pay interest. In this way, we struggled through this period. At my son's first month celebration, I got money from the credit union to have a feast.'

Nonetheless, 'fraternity credit groups' not only provide extra protection for workers in a crisis situation when they are sick or

unemployed, which is what the Chinese term 'fraternity' signified. Financial resources of the 'fraternity credit groups' also carry the modern meaning of a 'credit union' from which workers might obtain credit to set up their own small businesses. Without the help of the fraternity credit group, Mui could not have bought a second-hand wool sewer and become a subcontractor.

Mui 'A new machine would cost more than 1000 dollars. But a second-hand one costs 400. My husband said we got no money. I said I had joined a credit union upstairs. Then I drew the money out from the credit union and brought the second-hand machine home.'

Contrary to the shop-floor labour activism in Britain, the 'fraternity credit groups' and other mutual help networks among workers in Hong Kong mainly facilitated workers' efforts to rely on themselves. Nevertheless, these mutual help networks might disrupt the formation of the working class and the marginal working class. Whereas these mutual help networks provided the basic social network ('relationship' in the Chinese term) and resources (both financial and cultural) to enable workers to start their own small businesses, ironically, these working class networks turned workers away from their own class.

Failure of Shop-floor Organising

In this section, I will propose that class formation in Hong Kong is further hindered by the hegemonic political structure in Hong Kong and the power struggle of the CCP. The cultural approach maintains that the main reason for a weak trade union movement in Hong Kong lies in its traditional Confucian values. In contrast to this approach, I argue that a lack of

experience of shop-floor struggles, the withdrawal of trade union activists from organising and articulating workers' interests and the lack of galvanisation and conscientisation on the shop-floor, all contributed to a delay in the formation of a working class. A lack of experience of struggle, combined with a lack of leaders, meant the process stagnated. In addition the formation of the working class was disrupted by several historical events.

Most leaders and activists in the '*Guangdong*-Hong Kong General Strike' left Hong Kong and joined the 'Northern-Expedition' after the partial victory of 1927. During the Japanese invasion, left-wing trade union activists joined the CCP guerrillas in southern China. Under the authoritarian colonial rule, trade unions in Hong Kong only became lawful as late as 1948. However, as soon as the colonial government had noted signs of labour activism, it deported union leaders of the FTU (left-wing unions with a pro-CCP stance) and TUC (right-wing unions with a pro-Kuo Min Tang (KMT) stance) to China and Taiwan respectively.

Working class formation in Hong Kong was disrupted by the lack of, or degeneration of union leaders and shop-floor organisers, who often voluntarily or involuntarily dropped out of the trade union movement. Without a strong working class formation as in Britain, it is difficult for a separate marginal class to develop out of the working class. Hereunder, I will focus on how the lack of shop-floor trade union organisers hindered both the working class and marginal working class formations in the post-war period.

Wo (HK14), who participated in the 'Anti-colonialism, Counter-repression' in 1967, described how he was galvanised by the political propaganda.

Wo: 'I participated in demonstrations and petitions, etc. Well, it was because I had joined the union and was affected by union propaganda. I was very enraged. Why was I enraged? You could see it was the British who beat our people and imprisoned our people. Well, at that time, I was affected by the propaganda of nationalism and patriotism. We were moved so much that we thought we had to do something. We got the feeling that we should overthrow the colonial government.'

Confronting the violent repression from the colonial government, the leftist unions in Hong Kong did not retreat or withdraw, but prepared to fight back. Moreover, during the struggles, they developed romantic revolutionary 'communes'. Alongside the struggle, they sought to promote a happy cultural life with dancing, singing and studying every night. Its highly organised spirit and politicised agenda demonstrated the revolutionary potential of the working class under a repressive colonial state, a potential which was always neglected by other studies of the so-called 'apathetic' character of Hong Kong workers.

Wo: 'You know, the colonial government was bombarding our unions. It was really repressive. Then we worked in shifts to safeguard our union. There were three shifts in 24 hours. We stayed in and patrolled our union headquarters in order to protect it.'

During the 'anti-colonialism, counter-repression' movement, the working class was so politicised that they not only developed an intensive political consciousness but also active events. During the movement, thousands of militant trade unionists surrounded the Governor's House, the

most symbolic building of colonial rule. They covered the gate of the House with piles of 'big character posters', which called for the retreat of the British government. Bombs, faked and real, were then found in the streets. At the apex of the movement, union activists even spread rumours that the People's Liberation Army was prepared to cross the border to liberate Hong Kong.

However, the welcomed 'liberation' was denied by premier *Zhou En Lai*. In the end the struggle was bitterly repressed by the Hong Kong Government. Unions were attacked by police and activists were arrested and jailed. Some of them were even beaten to death during their arrest or imprisonment.

In 1968, the HKFTU urged its members to resume work. The HKFTU suffered not only a humiliating defeat, but also a frustration of the unfulfilled dream of 'returning' to the socialist motherland. It was the first defeat of the socialist dream that Hong Kong workers were conscious of. While the leftist unions could counteract the 'ideological' defeat through further propaganda and 'deepening' their studies of Maoism, the 'organisational' defeat was, however, severe and long-term. Following the repression, most shop-floor activists in the unions of civil servants, hospitals, public utilities and transportation companies, were dismissed and blacklisted. Consequentially, the FTU lost many shop-floor organisers in large enterprises and in the government, which were much more unionised than those in the small enterprises of the manufacturing and service industries. This

organisational defeat marked the decline of the shop-floor unionisation of the HKFTU.

Despite its defeat in 1967, the HKFTU developed significantly in the early 1970s. The development, however, concentrated on political propaganda and struggles in Mainland China rather than the class situation and struggle in Hong Kong. The 'socialist' dream of its members again drove the union movement into a politicised but 'out-of-local-context' development. Wo recalled the aspirations he had after he had joined a study tour to socialist China.

Wo: 'To have a look at collective ownership. We felt the strength of socialism. With those who joined the unions at the same time as me, all of us shared the same experience and feeling.'

The arrest of the Gang of Four and the denouncement of the Cultural Revolution and Maoism were, however, a great blow to both the leaders and mid-level organisers of the leftist unions in Hong Kong. Many of them became frustrated and then left their unions. Some of them felt they had been cheated by 'socialist' China, so they turned their ideology on its head. They grasped the opportunity of the 'open door policy' and 'economic reforms' and started their China trade businesses to help in the 'capitalisation' of China. These ideological and organisational defeats wiped out the remaining shop-floor organisers of the HKFTU.

Wo: 'We can say that union development was left unattended in the 1980s. No one bothered to care for your development. You grow and you become extinct. All depends on fate. Different levels of union officials and organisations were in the same situation. They were frustrated.'

In the 1980s the shop-floor union structure and base of other unions were much weaker than in the 1970s. Withdrawal of the organisers of the HKFTU in the 1970s and the 1980s almost paralysed shop-floor unionisation. Without the experience of shop-floor union struggle as in Britain, the making of the working class in Hong Kong is thus disrupted. Though the above-mentioned supporting facts refer to the HKFTU only, I maintain that my observations generally reflect the situation of class struggle and union experience in Hong Kong. This is because: firstly, the HKFTU has been and remains the largest federation of trade unions in Hong Kong. Secondly, the unions under HKFTU are the ones with longest history of struggle and organisation in Hong Kong. Thirdly, comparatively speaking, trade unions under HKFTU are more organised on the shop-floor than in the other independent unions. The shop-floor organisation of the other unions are weaker than that of the left-wing unions.⁶

The Overt and Covert Struggle

Deyo (1989) claims that East Asian development is associated with the expansion of employment relations based on patriarchal, paternalistic, and patrimonial systems of labour control. These systems prevent economic conflicts developing into collective organisation or public protest. Marginal

⁶ See for example Leung and Chiu (1991) about the weakness of the trade union movement in Hong Kong.

workers in Hong Kong, however, not only react covertly with low job commitment and high job turnover but also resist overtly in crisis situations, such as the winding up or closing down of plants.

Jan (HK10) once participated in a struggle in a crisis situation. She was working in an American toy factory when the protest happened. The factory was wound up after its management was charged with corruption. The workers did not receive any payment for the month and they acted collectively. Although Jan was not organised nor had she participated in any public protest before, she was greatly impressed and motivated by the support from other labour organisations.

Jan: 'A group of people gathered at the entrance of the factory to discuss. Some suggested we organise ourselves and find help from the Labour Department. Then, we sat at the bus stop near our factory. And then, Lau Chin-shek [a labour activist in Hong Kong] sent someone here. There were some social workers. They asked us what we were going to do and how they could help. They offered to help us. And then, from a very small starting point, it grew. They arranged coaches for us to go and get petitions. We went to the Governor's House, and then to the bank, and then to the Labour Department.'

Jan's experience shows that a labour dispute has left some impact on her consciousness, especially in her experiencing the collective power of the working class. However, like other workers, Jan did not join the trade union movement after the event. During the crisis Jan actively participated and organised fellow workers to join the action, but the temporary organisation and action was not sustained. Sustainability of these industrial actions is

significantly hindered by the crisis intervention model of the trade unions and labour activists.

Without a strong shop-floor union structure, unions in Hong Kong cannot get to know about any labour dispute either before it breaks out or in its early stages. They usually learn about it through news reports or the workers' appeals. Furthermore, unions cannot develop grassroots unions, with a limited number of full-time officials and rank-and-file leaders. They therefore tend to organise workers only in crisis situations, when workers are highly motivated in seeking help or when the press is interested in the dispute.

This crisis intervention model contributes to the formation of an amorphous consciousness among marginal workers. They will only stand up and fight against oppression and exploitation collectively as a last resort. Without the strong shop-floor organising power of the trade unions, as shown by the collective bargaining model of their British counterparts, an amorphous consciousness still reigns on the shop-floor among Hong Kong marginal workers.

Conclusion

In this chapter, firstly, I illustrate that the counter, non-conforming and cynical consciousness of marginal workers in both Britain and Hong Kong support my 'marginal is critical' thesis. Nevertheless, I also demonstrate that the consciousness of marginal workers in both regions present significant

variations. British marginal workers seem to be more aggressive, radical and cohesive, whereas Hong Kong marginal workers tend to be more defensive, conservative and amorphous.

Secondly, these differences in consciousness and actions of marginal workers have generated different paths of class formation in the two regions. While marginal workers in Britain have undergone a 'sedimentary' class formation, their counterparts in Hong Kong have only gone through a 'disrupted' process of formation. The 'sedimentary class formation' of marginal workers in Britain is enhanced by the shop-floor struggle experience as well as the training function of the trade union at the meso level. The 'disrupted class formation' of marginal workers in Hong Kong, however, is caused by the covert class struggle and a lack of shop-floor trade union organisers and experience of struggle.

Risking an over-generalisation, I summarise the difference in marginal class consciousness and formation between Britain and Hong Kong in Table 7.1

Table 7.1: Differences between Formation of Marginal Workers Class in Hong Kong and Britain

	Britain	Hong Kong
Location	Downwardly mobile	Uncertain
Consciousness	Critical	Amorphous
Practices	Counter-oppression	Survival tactics
Structure	Marginal trap	Permeable
Formation	Sedimentary	Disrupted
Action	Overt	Covert
Struggle	Rainbow Coalition	Guerrilla

Chapter 8

Conclusion: Theoretical and Practical Implications

Summary of Research Findings

My study has explored and explained the structural positions, consciousness and actions of marginal workers. Starting with the concern for the marginalisation of workers, I have described the rise of marginal workers in Britain and Hong Kong after the Second World War and asserted that they are not a minor, unimportant, powerless and transient element of capitalist development. Through a comparative study of the historical formation of marginal workers in post-war Britain and Hong Kong, I have suggested that marginal workers are important and indispensable to the development of capitalism in both regions. I have further maintained that marginal workers are indispensable in western capitalist countries and the NICs respectively, with Britain and Hong Kong as examples respectively. I have estimated, on a conservative basis, that marginal workers constituted more than one-third of the workforce of Britain in 1991. Marginal workers are as important as mainstream labour, if not more so, in contributing to the expanding world system.

In this study I have identified the structural causes of the rise of marginal workers at three different levels: the migration of capital at the global level; the policies attracting foreign investment of the super-state and state at the regional level; and the increasing authority and control of management in the labour process, production system, and labour market at the enterprise level.

Moreover, I have delineated the labour market structure and shown how it is composed not just by the employment relationships between workers and management, but also by the class relations between them. Labour markets are also socially constructed within the wider social context of gender and ethnic relations. Adopting different sources of statistical data, I have clearly illustrated that marginal workers have existed in different periods and have constituted a significant part of the workforce in both Britain and Hong Kong since the Second World War. This supports the first dimension of the 'marginal is critical' thesis, that 'critical' means importance.

Marginal workers are heterogeneous as they consist of a variety of subgroups, in which marginal workers are mediated and sorted by gender and ethnicity into marginal class locations. Work and life histories in my study support the finding that gender and ethnic inequalities in Britain and Hong Kong are articulated through and intensified by class inequality. Marginal workers share similar class locations in that they are either engaged in low-paid, insecure jobs, or are unemployed.

A marginal class location induces a marginal class consciousness. Marginal workers both in Britain and Hong Kong display a counter, non-conforming and cynical consciousness towards their oppression and exploitation. This sustains the second dimension of the 'marginal is critical' thesis that 'critical' stands for non-conforming. Despite the similarities, I have also pointed out that the consciousness of marginal workers in both regions varies significantly. British marginal workers are more aggressive, radical and cohesive, while marginal workers in Hong Kong are more self-defensive, conservative and amorphous. Different patterns of marginal consciousness of the marginal workers result from their distinctive process of class formation in their own historical development. While marginal workers in Britain have undergone a 'sedimentary' class formation, their counterparts in Hong Kong have experienced a 'disrupted' class formation.

The 'sedimentary class formation' of marginal workers in Britain is structured by the marginal trap class structure and the geographical immobility of some ethnic and gender groups at a macro level and influenced by the experience of shop-floor struggle as well as the training function of the trade union at a meso level. The 'disrupted class formation' of marginal workers in Hong Kong is caused by the permeable class structure and the covert class struggle at a macro level, along with the lack of shop-floor trade union organisers and experience of struggle at a meso level.

Although my study supports my first thesis that marginal is critical, the evidence is ambivalent in addressing the question of whether marginal

workers constitute a separate class. Difficulties in assessing the formation of a marginal class are, however, different in the two regions.

For Britain, by scrutinising the intra-generational mobility of the marginal workers, I have demonstrated that British workers have experienced a greater downward mobility from the mainstream, i.e. affluent workers can fall to become marginal workers. This I depicted as the 'marginal trap' class structure. For Hong Kong, by contrast, the movements between mainstream and marginal workers are bi-directional. The boundary between the mainstream and the marginal is so permeable that it is hard to draw a clear line between the marginal and mainstream workers. Despite that permeability, marginal workers are the majority in the specific historical context of Hong Kong.

Limitations of this Study

The first limitation of this study is its representativeness. Since the work and life history data cover only a limited number of cases, this study is incapable of over-generalising its claims of the inter-generational and intra-generational mobility between marginal and mainstream workers and assessing whether marginal workers constitute a new class arising out of the working class. However, this study has raised other important organising issues in addressing the making of a marginal class at the meso-level: the experience of shop-floor struggle in Britain, and mutual help and self-help organisations in Hong Kong. This organising thesis at the meso-level provides

an alternative research agenda beyond the dichotomy of the micro or macro level of class analysis in Hong Kong.¹

The ambivalent class formation of marginal workers also creates the dilemma that marginal workers face as regards their own self-organisation. Should they form independent groups and movements separate from mainstream working class trade unions or political parties? Should they join the mainstream to reshape the development of the working class movements? All these issues call for further investigation of the class practice and struggles of marginal workers in these two regions.

Another limitation is that, though my study focuses on the consciousness of marginal workers and their attitudes towards mainstream workers, it has neglected how the mainstream workers view marginal workers. Mainstream workers and their organisations definitely practise a policy of social exclusion and discriminate against marginal workers. However, has the struggle of marginal workers in the recent decades increased the sensitivity of the trade union movement and political parties towards ethnic and gender issues? Have 'incorporation' or 'reconciliation' become the new attitude of mainstream workers towards marginal workers? Does it signify a real solidarity between mainstream and the marginal workers? All these questions need further investigation.

¹ In Hong Kong, most studies on class analysis are based on a macro level analysis of class formation and intergenerational mobility (Wong and Lui 1992a; Wong and Lui 1992b; Wong and Lui 1993). Other mainstream sociological studies, which focus on the 'absence of class or class action', are based only on a micro level of analysis of the individuals or families (Lau 1982; Lau and Kuan 1988; Wong 1988). Both of them, however, neglect the meso level of the class formation process in Hong Kong.

Last but not least, the empirical data of this thesis focuses on more confined sub-groups of marginal workers than the original construction of a broad concept of marginal workers. This is because during the investigation I found that the class boundary between mainstream workers and marginal workers in the two regions was not as distinctive as my original hypothesis suggested. The class boundary between the marginal and the mainstream was semi-permeable in Britain and permeable in Hong Kong. Therefore I confined my analysis to those undisputed, stable and 'core' sub-groups of marginal workers. This study thus has not investigated in detail ambivalent sub-groups like part-time women workers, who may have been married to mainstream workers. This 'marginal' and other similar categories which lie between the marginal and the mainstream workers pose interesting research questions relating to their contradictory or changing position and consciousness. All of this needs further study.

Theoretical Implications

In the remaining sections, I will reflect on the theoretical and practical implications of my study. At the theoretical level, I will consider how my study reflects on the relations between the position, consciousness and action of social agents. On the practical side, I will discuss how my study addresses the strategies and tactics of marginal workers in challenging exploitation and oppression.

Interaction of Position, Consciousness and Action

Crompton (1993) argues that the linkage between class consciousness and action was first raised by Marx in addressing the revolutionary potential of the working class. Later, the linkage question also became a crucial conceptual debate in non-Marxist class analysis. Noted examples were Bendix and Lipset (1967), who attempted to make an analytical separation between 'structure' and 'action'. Lockwood (1989) suggested that Bendix and Lipset's work is associated with an 'action approach', and sought to establish the circumstances in which the common economic conditions and common experience of a group will lead to an organised action.

I firstly formulated my thesis of class consciousness along a traditional, simplistic and deterministic model, which stressed the limits which class structures placed on consciousness and action. I supposed that similar locations in the class structure would induce a 'critical' marginal consciousness among marginal workers. Moreover, this marginal consciousness would guide the individual and collective action of marginal workers in the struggle against the exploitation and oppression of capital, men and the mainstream. My original logic of thinking can be summarised as in Figure 8.1:

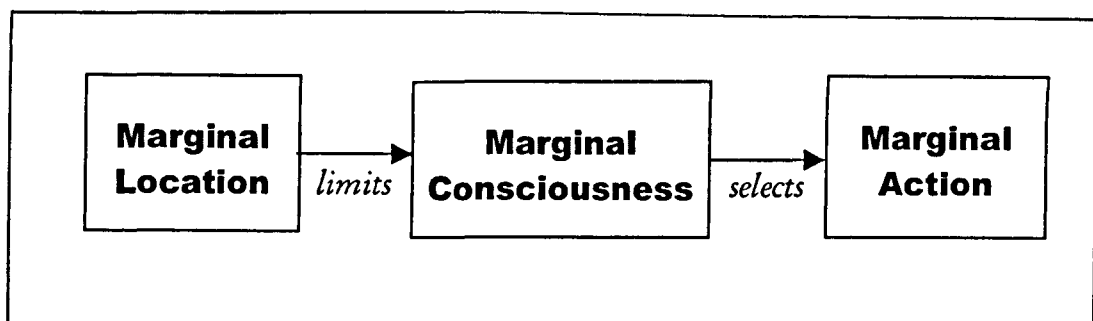


Figure 8.1: Original Theoretical Assumption: Relationship between the Location, Consciousness and Action of Marginal Workers

The above model assumes a simple uni-directional determination from 'location' to 'consciousness' and also from 'consciousness' to 'action'. This model repeats the two basic problems of the determinism of the functional school, both Marxist and orthodox. Firstly, it neglects or underestimates the subjective elements and actions of the agents in changing the structure. Secondly, it is also based on the assumption that consciousness predetermines action, but not vice versa. My study, however, indicates that the actions of agents can actually recreate and reformulate consciousness.

I then prefer to reformulate my model in relation to the class analysis model developed by Wright (1996) which I have commented as in Chapter 4. Through the oral history data in Britain and Hong Kong, my study can enrich and supplement the original model of Wright through specifying the details and magnitude of the 'limits' which class location places on class consciousness, and how the class formation process mediates class consciousness.

Based on Wright's model, I re-conceptualise and explain the differences between the consciousness and actions of marginal workers in Britain and Hong Kong through their asymmetrical interaction between action and consciousness. I discover that the 'action' of Hong Kong marginal workers transforms their consciousness, in contrast to the 'traditional' assumption that it is their consciousness that limits their action. However, evidence from the British marginal workers supports the traditional assumption that their consciousness 'selects' their actions but not vice versa.

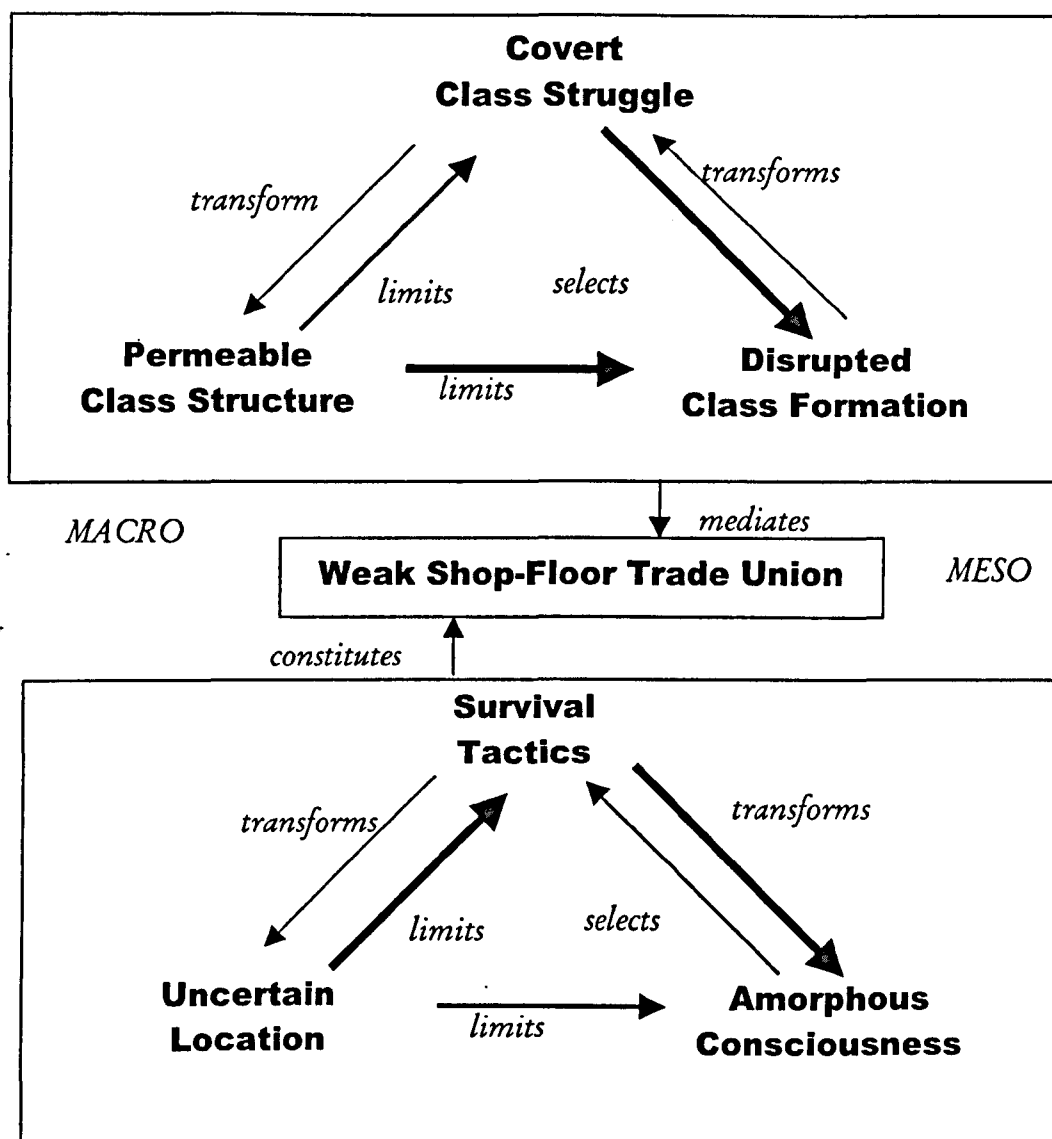


Figure 8.2: A Class Analysis Model of Marginal Workers in Hong Kong

Figure 8.2 summarises the model of the class analysis of marginal workers in Hong Kong. Uncertain class location of the marginal workers in Hong Kong has a profound effect on their survival tactics. They choose to advance their own interests by means of setting up small businesses and becoming their own boss. Therefore, when they alternate between being

employees, the self-employed, and employers, these ambivalent experiences induce an amorphous consciousness: they can be radical as well as conservative, altruistic as well as hedonistic. Therefore, the direction of influence at the micro level is from 'location' to 'practice', and then from 'practice' to 'consciousness' (see the thicker arrows in the model). Moreover, at the micro level, the 'uncertain class location' and the fluctuating class mobility experience constitute a 'permeable class structure' between marginal workers and mainstream workers. At the macro level, this 'amorphous consciousness' of individual marginal workers constitutes the 'disrupted class formation'.

Therefore, the permeable class structure between mainstream and marginal workers directly disrupts the marginal class formation in Hong Kong. Moreover, it is also important for the meso level to be linked to the micro and macro level. It is the social organisation among members of a class that enables and facilitates class formation. I have highlighted in Chapter 7 that the union movement of Hong Kong has been suffering from a lack of shop-floor organisation and the gradual withdrawal of rank-and file organisers. Without a strong trade union movement, Hong Kong workers experience fewer organised overt struggles such as collective bargaining, strikes or boycotts. Poverty of experiences of shop-floor struggle, especially in the production process, also disrupts the class formation of marginal workers. This disruption further reinforces their amorphous consciousness and survival tactics, such as 'becoming one's own boss' as an 'escape' from the control of capital.

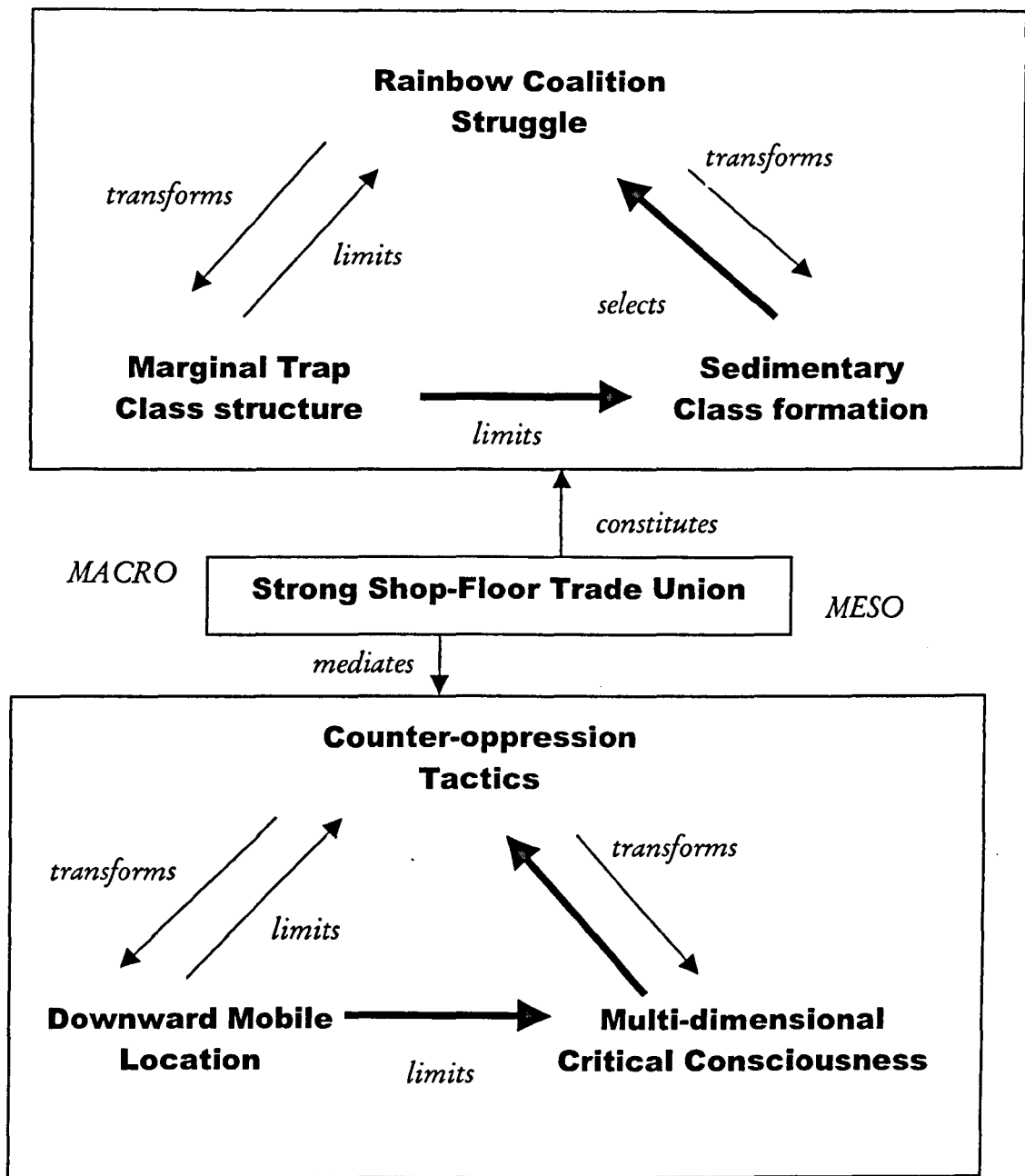


Figure 8.3: A Class Analysis Model of Marginal Workers in Britain

In the previous chapters, I illustrated that marginal workers are trapped by their long-term downward mobility and their low geographical mobility. This 'marginal trap class structure' thus limits the 'sedimentary class formation' of marginal workers.

The metaphor of sedimentation suggests that different layers can be identified among marginal workers. Internal stratification 'selects' its own organisations. Marginal workers organise themselves not only in organisations along class lines such as unions and political parties, but also along ethnic and gender lines. These organisations may form a rainbow coalition and undertake a united struggle against oppression and exploitation. In Britain, the sedimentary class formation, and the overlapping with ethnic and gender divisions mediate a 'multi-dimensional critical consciousness' of marginal workers. The marginal class develops consciousness not only against class exploitation, but also against gender and ethnic exploitation and oppression. This multi-dimensional critical consciousness is developed from their location due to the downward mobility among individual marginal workers. Their experiences of downward mobility induce a more well-shaped and critical stand than is found among their Hong Kong counterparts.

The role of unions in the process of class formation of marginal workers is significant at the meso level. Many British marginal workers advance their interests through collective means, by joining unions and forming other movements or organisations. Their activism has been cultivated by a long tradition of experience of shop-floor struggle, and strong

shop-floor trade union organising structures. The union movement has acted as a school to train and supply organisers for other movements. Therefore, British marginal workers are more ready to act collectively to protect their interests than the marginal workers in Hong Kong. British marginal workers fight not only through unions, but also through other collective institutions such as ethnic organisations and communities.

In the case of British marginal workers, the logic of influence is similar to my original traditional assumption: position affects consciousness and action. The 'marginal trap class structure' selects the 'sedimentary class formation', which in turn selects the 'rainbow coalition struggle'. Contrary to the Hong Kong case, the macro process of sedimentary class formation in Britain mediates the micro level phenomena.

These two distinct models of class analysis can therefore explain the differences between British and Hong Kong marginal workers and why British marginal workers tend to be more critical and collective than their Hong Kong counterparts at the micro level. They can also address the question by explaining the differences at the macro level, namely that Hong Kong marginal workers have undergone a disrupted formation and adopted covert struggles.

Besides explaining the differences of consciousness and action, the above models can also address the interaction between consciousness and action. In the British model, since 'structure' limits 'consciousness' and 'consciousness' selects 'action', the action of 'overt struggle' results from the

'critical' consciousness of British marginal workers. In the Hong Kong model, on the contrary, 'action' determines 'consciousness' of the agents. 'Survival' tactics of the agents reinforce an 'amorphous consciousness' among the marginal workers themselves.

This theoretical implication suggests a more dialectical interaction between action and consciousness. This implies that action and consciousness 'select' each other, when agents are transforming structures. Action and consciousness act together rather than separately or operating on different planes. Figure 8.4 summaries this theoretical implication.

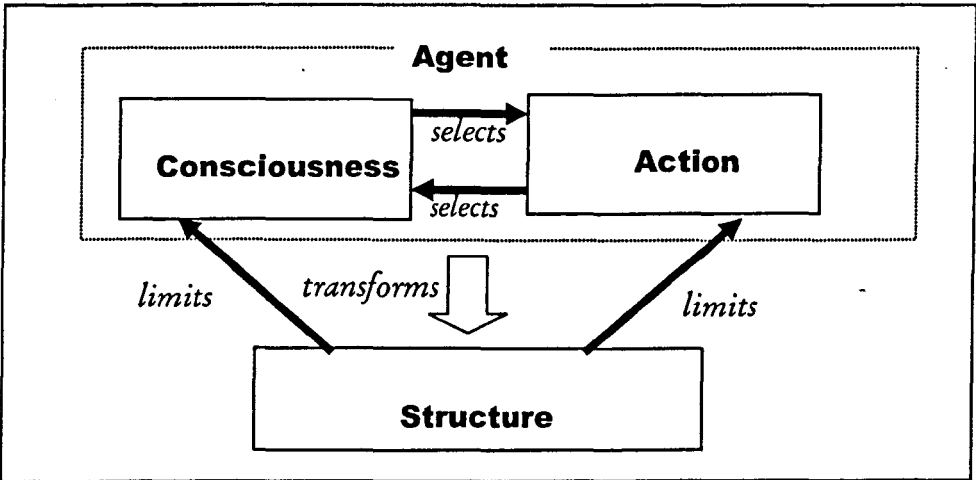


Figure 8.4: A Dialectical Model between Action and Consciousness

Practical Implications: Future Strategies and Struggles of Marginal Workers

In the following section, I evaluate and suggest strategies for marginal workers in fighting against the increasing oppression and exploitation placed upon them. In Britain the sedimentary class formation induces a strong union movement and a set of rainbow coalitions. In contrast, the highly oppressive atmosphere and permeable class structure in Hong Kong pushes workers to perform covert rather than overt struggles against exploitation and oppression. Furthermore, Hong Kong marginal workers lack a strong shop-floor union and the experience of struggle. They are used to organising 'mutual-help' and 'self-help' groups as survival strategies. How can marginal workers in the two regions learn from each other?

Experience of Britain

Shop-floor Organising and Struggle

Many marginal workers in Britain have participated in shop-floor trade unions and have been involved in collective struggles for pay rises and against management. These collective struggle experiences in the production process provide British marginal workers with ideological and organisational resources to enhance and extend their struggles and movements from fighting the exploitation of capital to other arenas, such as racism and sexism.

Firstly, the experiences of struggle against management have made British workers more aware of the antagonism between capital and labour. As

I have shown in Chapter 7, British marginal workers have developed a more well-shaped radical consciousness and socialist beliefs. They are more sensitive about exploitation in the workplace, about 'dignity' in getting a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. Unionisation experiences of marginal workers on the shop-floor unmask capital as a real, and visible actor.

Secondly, shop-floor trade union organisations provide marginal workers with the invaluable organisational experience of collective actions, which further enables them to organise collective actions in other social movements, for example, the Pensioner Movement. Moreover, struggles against capital may also diminish the minor divisions among workers along ethnic or gender lines. Shop-floor struggles can transform the fight against economic injustice into fights against other forms of 'social injustice' such as racism and sexism.²

In Hong Kong, since the lack of such experience hampers the class formation of the working class, groups of marginal workers should place more effort and resources into re-establishing union structures or other workers organisations (like the committee of safety representatives) at the shop-floor level.³ The existing 'labour legislation centred' approach has shaped the union movement into more and more elitist, centralised, and bureaucratic

² This corresponds to the 'ethical trade unionism' suggested by the Flanders (1970) and this Fabian tradition has a continuous and significant impact on the trade union movement in Britain, whereas 'welfare trade unionism' is more common in Hong Kong.

³ Some industrial relations academics like Turner (1988) and England (1989) noted the importance of shop-floor organisation among workers, but they pointed in the direction of legally binding 'joint consultation'. This will reinforce the 'labour legislation centred' approach of the existing unions, which is also a critical factor for the underdevelopment of the shop-floor trade union movement in Hong Kong. For a detailed discussion of the 'labour legislation centred' approach, refer to Wong (1999).

unions (Wong 1999). Rather than merely increasing material welfare to their members, unions in Hong Kong should go 'back to basics' by focusing their energies more on the development of shop-floor structures and on the conflicts between capital and labour in the production process. Labour groups in Hong Kong should transcend the 'mutual-help and self-help' approach and organise marginal workers to form new unions along gender, ethnic or occupational lines of division.⁴ By re-establishing shop-floor organising structures and revitalising shop-floor struggles in the production process, the marginal class will be transformed from a disrupted one to one capable of class actions.⁵

Relationship with Mainstream Organisations

In Britain the IWA(GB) has utilised all the three approaches: 'black separatist' and 'incorporation' as well as the 'race and class' approach (Wrench and Virdee 1994). These strategies provide several insights into marginal organisations in handling their relationship with mainstream union organisations in Britain and Hong Kong.

Firstly, it is important to organise marginal workers along ethnic or gender division lines. Owing to their subordinated gender and ethnic position, many marginal workers develop strong ethnic or gender identities and consciousness. Furthermore minority ethnic workers had organised

⁴ In October 1997, a new union 'Urban Service Department Workers and Clerical Staff Association' was formed with the help of the Neighbourhood and Workers Service Centre. Formation of the union was a specific effort to organise temporary workers of the Urban Service Departments, which is the first attempt of labour groups in Hong Kong to organise unions exclusively for marginal workers.

themselves into 'community based' rather than 'work-based' organisations amidst the racist exclusion of the white trade unions in the 1950s and 1960s (Wrench 1986). It is more effective to organise marginal workers according to their ethnic or gender divisions rather than along the traditional class division. Moreover, those gender or ethnic organisations generate stronger identification and solidarity than the traditional class divisions.⁶

Secondly, the organisations of marginal workers should return to the realm of the class struggle. Although marginal workers start to organise themselves along ethnic or gender divisions, these organisations should not merely focus on gender or ethnic issues. They should transcend the narrow definitions of gender and ethnic consciousness, and articulate gender and ethnic inequality with class inequality. Organisations of marginal workers, therefore, should 'bring class struggles back'. They should articulate and organise struggles of marginal workers on class issues both in the workplaces and in society.⁷ The class struggles will create the opportunity for the organisations of marginal worker to co-operate with the mainstream trade unions and working class movements.

Thirdly, the organisations of marginal workers can use 'small to influence big'. Despite co-operation with the mainstream trade union

⁵ Henderson and Whitley (1998) note that secondary association of the trade unions are weak in the East Asian Countries, while the labour movement of Eastern Europe is more organised, successful in mobilising loyalties from workers.

⁶ For example, Rex and Moore (1967) and Rex (1986) argue that the ethnic minorities form a 'housing-class', whose struggles foster residential segregation and hamper class integration.

⁷ Sivanandan describes the black power and black culture movement as a journey of the black intellectual 'from race to class', from "taking conscience of himself" to coming to consciousness of class'. (1982: 55)

movement, marginal workers should retain their autonomy and not be merged or incorporated into the mainstream organisations. In spite of their small size, marginal workers' organisations can actively influence the vision, policy and structure of the mainstream union movement by encouraging its members to be actively involved in the mainstream union, especially in campaigning against racism and sexism inside the mainstream unions (Josephides 1990).

Finally, to achieve greater impact and to show support to other new social movements, marginal workers' organisations should form rainbow coalitions with the organisations of other new social movements, such as anti-nuclear, green, or human rights campaigns. These rainbow coalitions may bring a greater social impact. More importantly, they can transcend the 'economism' of the mainstream working class movement and provide a new vision and mission for the working class movement (Wrench and Virdee 1994).

In Hong Kong most ethnic and gender related organisations of marginal workers have focused on 'mutual-help and self-help' activities or political advocacy against public policies. They have neglected class struggles in the production process.⁸ Moreover, most of them do not actively influence the policy and practice of the mainstream unions, but are only concerned about their own survival. Therefore, the organisations of marginal workers in

⁸ For the 'mutual-help and self-help' orientation of labour groups, see Industrial Relations Institute (1998). For the policy advocacy or state-orientation, see Hong Kong Women Workers Association (1997).

Hong Kong should learn from the organising strategies and tactics of the British marginal workers' organisations by maintaining their autonomy but actively influencing the direction and policy of the big mainstream trade unions or political parties.

Experiences of Hong Kong

The 'mutual-help and self-help' approach of Hong Kong marginal workers provides practical implications for their British counterparts. A central question puzzles British marginal workers and their organisations: who is the primary enemy: the state, capital, men or the ethnic majority? Feminists and women's groups maintain that male domination is the main source of oppression. However, ethnic minorities tend to consider the 'racism' of the ethnic majority as the primary enemy. Left-wing labour groups assert that the capitalists create inequalities among workers, no matter whether they are men or women, white or black.

The 'mutual-help and self-help' tactic, however, can transcend this endless debate. It provides a united base for marginal workers to recognise their allies. Through the mutual-help process, different sectors of marginal workers may understand each other and break down the 'walls' between them. The 'mutual-help and self-help' strategy, therefore, is one of the effective tools to end sectionalism among marginal workers in Britain.

Among the Hong Kong working 'sisters', the 'mutual-help and self-help' tactic surpasses their uncertain class location when women supervisors

and workers participate in the same workers' gang. While this tactic provides a remedy to accommodate the Hong Kong marginal workers' 'amorphous consciousness', some feminists contend that it can also solve the 'contradictory subjectivity and ambiguous purpose' of agents.

MacLeod (1995) suggests that women, even as subordinate players, always play an active part that goes beyond the dichotomy of victimisation/acceptance, a dichotomy that flattens out a complex and ambiguous agency in which women accept, accommodate, ignore, resist, or protest – sometimes all at the same time. MacLeod argues that power relationships should be viewed as an ongoing relationship of struggle, a struggle complicated by women's own contradictory subjectivity and ambiguous purpose.

Franzen (1995) argues that because women's experience is multi-dimensional and shaped by class and race, as well as gender, it cannot provide the sole basis for political solidarity. Franzen recapitulates that different women's groups should understand and respect each other's choices without denying each others' subjectivity. The 'mutual-help and self-help' approach provides the necessary organisational base for both women and men of different ethnicities to 'understand and respect each other's choices'.

Furthermore, the mutual-help and self-help strategy can build up confidence, self-efficacy and mutual support among marginal workers. It can facilitate small autonomous marginal workers' groups to grow in an adverse environment. Moreover, confidence and solidarity among the groups also

empower marginal workers to resist exploitation and oppression. The sisters' gang in Hong Kong switches jobs collectively against low wages and an adverse working environment. Therefore, amidst the adverse atmosphere of a repressive state (no matter whether there is a Conservative or a Labour government), British marginal workers' groups can utilise the 'mutual-help and self-help' strategy to build up their own strength, as a manifestation of the 'guerrilla' tactic suggested by Mao to move a step backwards to prepare to move two steps forward.

A Final Remark: The Continuous Marginalisation and Class Formation Process

I have explored whether marginal workers develop a critical consciousness and whether a marginal class can carry out class actions to counter or remedy its fear and anger, sorrow and suffering due to their continual marginalisation.

In Britain, the defeat of the Conservative Party in 1997 after eighteen years in power indicates that the discontent of the masses revolted against the hegemonic rule of Thatcherism, which was allied with capital in marginalising labour. However, the victory of the Labour Party, or more precisely the right-wing of the Labour Party under Tony Blair's leadership, indicates that they have inherited Thatcherism and continue to marginalise labour. Under the pro-middle class policy of the right-wing Labour government, the cleavage between mainstream workers and marginal workers may grow even wider.

After the Asian financial crisis exploded in October 1997, Hong Kong faces the most severe economic downturn of the last thirty years. Hundreds of thousands of middle management and service workers in Hong Kong face redundancy and wage cuts. This crisis signifies not only 'the end of the Asian miracle' but also an extension of marginalisation from manual workers to non-manual workers. The impact of the Asian financial crisis on the NICs, in particular the cutting-off of cheap foreign loans and investment, resembles a crisis of the scale of the 1970s in the West. Then, the end of a cheap oil supply and a stable exchange market in the West disrupted these economies. Hong Kong and other NICs are facing a long economic downturn as the West did in the 1970s. When the marginalisation of workers in Hong Kong is intensified, will the 'permeable' class structure transform into a marginal class trap that the British case shows? Will the 'disrupted class formation' eventually develop into the 'sedimentary class formation', as in the British case? These developments seem possible but they need further research. More research to investigate the continuous marginalisation of workers as well as the relationship between marginal class formation and the formation of the mainstream working class in the two regions are recommended.

Finally, I argue that marginal workers are not the minor, unimportant, powerless and transient elements of capitalist development. Marginal is critical. Marginal workers can unite and resist the oppression and exploitation visited upon them. However, whether their struggles will be successful is an unfinished story.

Appendix 1

Classification of Oral History Informants

The West Midland, Britain

1. Self-employed

Cat	Industry	Occupation/ Characteristics	Ethnicity	Sex	Age
S1	Small catering service/take away	Family businesses/ self-exploitative	Chinese Indian	M/F	30-50
S2	Retailing/mobile market	Informal/moon lighting for tax purpose	White Black	M/F	20-60
S3	Transport taxi/lorry driver	Owner of means of production but in debt for repayments	Pakistani Bangladeshi	M	30-60
S4	Casual labourer/ market porter	Temporary worker	White Black	M	30-50
S5	Construction/	Unskilled labourer	White Irish	M	20-30
S6	Manufacturing	Homeworker	Indian Pakistani	F	20-40

2. Employees

Cat	Industry	Occupation/ Characteristics	Ethnicity	Sex	Age
E1	Small manufacturing enterprises	Unskilled worker/ temporary/casual worker	All	M/F	16-60
E2	Large manufacturing enterprises	Flexible worker	White Black Indian	M/F	16-20

E3	Personal service	Part-time household worker/cleaner	White Black	F	20-50
E4	Public sector service	Part-time cleaner	Black White	M/F	15-60
E5	Large chain catering service	Part-time student/youth worker	White Black Indian	M/F	15-20
E6	Mining or Steel Industry	Diminishing industry with an aged but militant workforce	White Black	M	40-60

3.Non-employed/unemployed

Cat	Industry (part-time or previous jobs)	Occupation/ Characteristics	Ethnicity	Sex	Age
N1		Student (full-time or part-time)	White Chinese	M/F	16-30
N2	small retailing / corner shop	Unpaid family worker	Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi	F	16-50
N3		Retired but do some casual job	White Black Indian	M/F	> 60
N4		Never-employed youth	White Black Indian		
N5		Long-term unemployed	All	M/F	30-50
N6		Single mother	White Black	F	20-40

Hong Kong

1. Self-employed

Cat	Industry	Occupation/ Characteristics	Ethnicity	Sex	Age
S1	small catering service/food-stall	highly self-exploitative/family exploitative	Chinese	M/F	30-50
S2	Retailing	Hawker/ Informal economy	Chinese new immigrant	M/F	20-60
S3	Transport taxi/lorry driver-	Owner of means of production	Chinese	M	30-60
S4	casual labourer/ market porter	'Long-term' temporary workers	Chinese new immigrant	M	30-50
S5	construction	Contractor/skilled worker/ unskilled labourer	Chinese	M	20-30
S6	Manufacturing	Out workers/ garment worker	Chinese	F	20-40

2. Employees

Cat	Industry	Occupation/ Characteristics	Ethnic	Sex	Age
E1	Small manufacturing enterprises	Unskilled/ semi-skilled worker	Chinese	M/F	16-60
E2	Retail, trading and business service	Temporary/ casual worker	Chinese	M/F	40-60
E3	Household service	Domestic helper/ part-time cleaner	Chinese Filipino Thai	F	20-70
E4	Public sector service	Temporary cleaner	Chinese	M/F	15-60
E5	Catering service	Elderly worker	Chinese	M/F	15-20
E6	Dockyard or Steel Industry	Diminishing industry with an aged but militant workforce	Chinese	M	40-60

3.Non/unemployed

N1		Student doing part-time jobs	Chinese	M/F	16-30
N2	Small retailing / small manufacturing workshop	Unpaid family workers	Chinese	F	16-50
N3		Retired but do some casual job	Chinese	M/F	> 60
N4		Unemployed youth	Chinese	M/F	16-20
N5		Long-term unemployed	Chinese	M/F	30-50
N6		Single mother	Chinese new immigrant	F	20-40

Appendix 2: Summary of Informants' Characteristics

Britain

Case UK01 - 06

Case No.	Substituted Name	Category/ Economic Status	Industry	Occupation	Sex	Age in 1994	Ethnic Origin	Family
UK01	Daksha	S6 Home worker /housewife	Garment	Home worker/out-worker	F	35	Indian Sikh	Widowed with 4 children
UK02	-	S6 Part-time employee/self-employed	Education /tailoring	English teacher /home worker	F	22	Punjabi Indian	Married without children
UK03	-	S1 Self-employed	Small catering: Chinese take away/medical care	Owner of family business /physiotherapist	F	46	Chinese	Married with 1 daughter
UK04	Mohammed	S1 Self-employed	Transport	Taxi- driver	M	40	Pakistani	Married with 5 daughters and 1 son
UK05	-	S1 Self-employed	Small catering: Chinese take away	Owner of family business	M	41	Chinese	Married with 3 sons
UK06	-	N2 Unpaid family worker	Small catering: Chinese take away	Unpaid family worker	F	37	Chinese	Wife of UK05

Case UK07 - 17

Case No.	Substituted Name	Category/ Economic Status	Industry	Occupation	Sex	Age in 1994	Ethnic Origin	Family
UK07	Stephen	N5 Long-term unemployed	Construction/ Media	Casual worker	M	35	Irish	Single
UK08	-	N4 Never-employed Youth			M	17	Pakistani	Single
UK09	-	N6 Non-employed /part-time employee	Education	Single mother /part-time clerical worker	F	34	Punjabi Indian	Single mother with 2 children
UK10	-	N3 Retired but do part-time work		Part-time research interviewer	M	69	White	Married with 1 daughter
UK11	Jack	N3 Non-employed		Part-time gardener /retired	M	72	White	Married with 1 son
UK12	Sandy	N1 Single mother /student	Education	Part-time tutor and library work	F	34	White	Single mother with 1 son
UK13	Betty	N3 Retired	Government	Court clerk	F	67	White	Single mother with 1 son
UK14	-	S3 Self-employed	Transportation	Courier	M	57	White	Married
UK15	-	S2 Self-employed	Retailing	Ice-cream seller	M	40	Italian	
UK16	Anna	N6 Part-time worker/single mother	Education	Course facilitator	F	34	Afro-Caribbean	Single mother with 1 son
UK17	-	N1 Student/employee	Large manufacturing	Student/employee	M	36	White	

Case UK18 - 28

Case No.	Substituted Name	Category/ Economic Status	Industry	Occupation	Sex	Age in 1994	Ethnic Origin	Family
UK18	Jenny	S1 Self-employed	Catering: Chinese take away	Owner of family business	F	47	Chinese	Married with 1 daughter
UK19	-	S5 Employee	Construction	Painter	M	46	White	
UK20	-	E2 Employee	Mechanical engineering	Production manager	M	40	Polish	
UK21	-	E2 Employee	Mechanical engineering	Maintenance supervisor	M	26	Irish	
UK22	Sondhi	E2 Employee	Mechanical engineering	Machine setter	M	47	Indian	
UK23	-	E2 Employee	Mechanical engineering	Machine operator	M	57	White, Hungarian	
UK24	Manjit	E2 Employee	Foundry	Worker	M	52	Indian	Married with 3 children
UK25	Neelam	E1 Employee	Garment	Sewing machinist	F	45	Indian	Married with 3 children
UK26	Jane	E4 Part-time employee	Social service, local government	Home helper	F	57	White	Widowed with 4 children
UK27	-	N5 Non-employed/ homeless		Homeless/ex-lecturer	M	55	White	Divorced with children, lived singly
UK28	-	N5 Non-employed/ homeless		Ex-homeless	M	24	White	

Case UK 29 - 42

Case No.	Substituted Name	Category/ Economic Status	Industry	Occupation	Sex	Age in 1994	Ethnic Origin	Family
UK30	Mark	N5 Non-employed/ ex-homeless, long-term unemployed	Manufacturing	Unskilled worker	M	30	White, German	
UK31	-	S5 Self-employed	Construction	Brick-layer/trade unionist	M	48	White	
UK32	-	E1 Employee	Food manufacturing	Seasonal worker	M	35	White	Divorced
UK33	-	E7 Employee	Industrial cleaning	Cleaner	M	48	White	Divorced
UK35	Dorothy	E4 Employee	Health service	Senior pharmacy technician	F	41	Afro-Caribbean	Single, lived with mother
UK36	Raj	N2 Self-employed	Retailing: corner shop	Owner of family business	M	50	Indian	
UK37	-	E5 Employee	Fast Food	Part-time worker	F	17	Chinese	
UK38	-	N1 Student	Hair Dressing	Student/ Part-time worker	F	35	Chinese	Married
UK39	Martha	E4 Employee	Local government	Typist	F	34	Afro-Caribbean	Single mother with 3 children
UK40	-	S2 Self-employed	Retailing	Owner of small clothing shop	M	40	Indian	Married with 3 children
UK41	Aneil	S3 Self-employed	Transport	Driving instructor	M	36	Pakistani	Married with 2 sons
UK42	Joe	N4 Part-time employee	Social service	Part-time youth worker	M	30	Afro-Caribbean	Lived with partner with 2 children

Case UK 45-47

Case No.	Substituted Name	Category/ Economic Status	Industry	Occupation	Sex	Age in 1994	Ethnic Origin	Family
UK43	-	E4 Employee	Local Health Authority	Pharmacy technician	F	41	White	Married with 2 children
UK44	-	S1 Self-Employed	Retailing: corner shop	Owner of corner shop	M	32	Indian	Married
UK45		N2 Unpaid Family Worker	Retailing: corner shop	Unpaid family worker in corner shop	M	22	Bangladeshi	Single
UK46	David	E4 Employee	Education	Teacher	M	47	Welsh	Married with 2 sons
UK47	-	S1 Self-employed	Retailing: corner shop	Owner of family business	M	39	Bangladeshi	Married

Hong Kong

Case HK01 - 10

Case No.	Substituted Name	Category / Economic Status	Industry	Occupation	Sex	Age in 1996	Ethnic Origin	Family
HK01	Flora	E3 Employee	Personal Service	Domestic Helper	F	35	Filipino	Single
HK02	-	E3 Employee	Personal Service	Domestic Helper	F	26	Thai	Single
HK03	Sau	E1 Employee	Garment	Sewer	F	48	Chinese	Married with 3 children
HK04	Hei	E1 Employee/retired	Garment	Packaging labourer	F	82	Chinese	Widowed with 3 children
HK05	Mui	E4 Employee	Service	Part-time cleaner	F	38	Chinese	Married with 4 children
HK06	Yee	E1 Employee	Health	Labourer	F	48	Chinese	Married with 3 children
HK07	Ong	S1 Self-employed	Catering	Owner of small food stall	M	55	Chinese	Married with 3 children
HK08	Kam	S2/E4 Employee/ self-employed	Retail/ public sector service	Hawker/ school cleaner	F	61	Chinese	Married with 3 children
HK09	-	S3 Self-employed/ Retired	Transportation	Lorry driver	M	64	Chinese	Married with 3 children
HK10	Jan	E1 Employee/ employer of small factory	Toy Manufacturing	Foreman/ owner	F	50	Chinese	Separated with 2 children

Case HK11 - 22

Case No.	Substituted Name	Category / Economic Status	Industry	Occupation	Sex	Age in 1996	Ethnic Origin	Family
HK11	Eight	E3 Employee	Personal service	Domestic maid	F	78	Chinese	Single, spinster
HK12	Tai	E3 Employee	Personal service	Domestic maid	F	81	Chinese	Single, spinster
HK13	-	E3 Employee	Personal service	Domestic maid	F	80	Chinese	Single, spinster
HK14	Wo	S5 Sub-contractor	Construction	Painting contractor	M	44	Chinese	Married with 3 children
HK15	-	S7 Self-employed/ Retired	Fishing	Fisherman	M	63	Chinese	Married with 4 children
HK16	-	S7 Self-employed/Retired	Farming	Vegetable farmer	M	65	Chinese	Married with 2children
HK17	Kwai	N5 Employee/ unemployed	Garment	Sewer	F	33	Chinese	Married with 2 children
HK18	Pui	N5 Employee/ unemployed	Toy Manufacturing	Mould maker	M	63	Chinese	Married with 2 children
HK19	Mei	N5 Employee/ unemployed	Garment	Sewer	F	30	Chinese	Married
HK20	-	N5 Employee/ retired since ill health	Mining	Granite miner	M	62	Chinese	Married
HK21	-	N6Unemployed			F	40	Chinesene w immigrant	Single parent with 2 children
HK22	Man	N6 Unemployed	Market	Hawker	F	31	Chinesene w immigrant	Single parent with 1 child

Case HK23-36

Case No.	Substituted Name	Category / Economic Status	Industry	Occupation	Sex	Age in 1996	Ethnic Origin	Family
HK23	Tong	E1 Employee	Warehouse	Delivery man	M	55	Chinesene w immigrant	Married with 2 children in Mainland
HK24	-	N3 Unemployed		Cardboard collecting	M	62	Chinese	Single
HK25	-	N3 Unemployed	Construction	Site worker	M	69	Chinese	Married with children
HK26	Bill	N5 Unemployed/homeless	Farming/construction	Labourer	M	63	Chinese	Single
HK27	-	S4 Retired		Coolie	M	71	Chinese	Single
HK28	-	N5 Unemployed/homeless	Cinema	Seating guide	M	40	Chinese	Single
HK29	-	N3 Retired		Labourer	F	82	Chinese	Single
HK30	Ching	N5 unemployed	Garment		F	42	Chinese	Single parent with 3 children
HK31	-	N4 unemployed			M	27	Chinese	Single
HK32	-	S4 Employee	Film	Stand-by actor	M	31	Chinese	Single
HK33	-	N5 unemployed			M	59	Chinese	Single
HK34	-	E7 employee	Transportation	Coolie	M	32	Chinese	Single
HK35	-	N5 retired/jobless			M	67	Chinese	Single
HK36	-	N5 unemployed	Army	Tailor	M	61	Chinese	Married, Wife & children in Mainland

Case HK37 - 48

Case No.	Substituted Name	Category / Economic Status	Industry	Occupation	Sex	Age in 1996	Ethnic Origin	Family
HK37	-	N3 Unemployed		Labourer	M	72	Chinese	married, wife & children in Mainland
HK38	Wong	S2/E1 Unemployed		Hawker/factory worker	M	40	Chinese	Married with 2 children
HK39	-	E7 Employee	Construction	Worker/seaman	M	53	Chinese	Married with 1 child
HK40	-	N5 Unemployed	Construction	Labourer	M	58	Chinese	Single
HK41	-	E7 Employee	transportation	Labourer/coolie	M	36	Chinese	Married with 1 child, wife and child in China
HK42	Lam	E1 Employee	Garment	Sales	F	40	Chinese	Single parent with 1 child
HK43	Oi	N7 Housewife		Teacher	F	40	Chinese	Married with 3 children, eldest son still in Mainland
HK44	-	N5 Unemployed	Garment	Knitter	M	62	Chinese	Married with 2 children
HK45	-	N3 Unemployed/ retired		labourer	M	72	Chinese	Single
HK46	Wen	N5 Unemployment	Garment	Sewer	F	32	Chinese	Married with 2 children
HK47		E5 Employee	Catering	Labourer	F	52	Chinese	Married with 3 children
HK48		E5 Employee	Catering	Labourer	F	62	Chinese	Single

Topics and Questions of Oral History Interviews

1. Work and Life History

1.1 work history

- 1.11 occupational changes since the age of 16
- 1.12 industry and occupation characteristics of each job
 - skill level/status/pay/autonomy
 - gender/ethnic ratio
 - characteristics of enterprise
- 1.13 reasons for job/occupation changes
 - personal
 - family
 - structural

1.2 life history

- 1.21 family background
 - country of origin/place of birth
 - father and mother's occupation at birth and at age 14
 - date of arrival in Britain/Hong Kong
- 1.22 life events
 - marriage
 - child birth
 - child departure
 - migration/home moving

2. Current Situation (Objective Structural Context)

2.1 current job characteristics

- 2.11 class characteristics
 - relationship to means of production/ownership and control
 - relationship to employer/supplier/contractor/loan lender
 - skill level: de-skilling? degrading?
 - organisational level
 - closely supervised? by machine/technology/supervisor?
 - supervisory responsibility?
 - job security/outward mobility
- 2.12 status characteristics
 - masculine or feminine job
 - ethnic ratio and concentration
 - prestige (self-perceived and other-perceived)

2.2 relation/interaction of class, gender and ethnicity

- 2.21 source of domination and exploitation at workplace/home/community
 - how: domination? vs. exploitation?
 - who gets what from whom?
 - where is the domination and exploitation taking place?
- 2.22 'protection' from other sources of domination/exploitation

2.3 family/informal group/organisation

- 2.31 family
 - power structure: degree of patriarchy?
 - relation among members: economic/social/cultural
 - division of labour: source of exploitation and anti-exploitation
- 2.32 informal group
 - friends/peers/relatives/neighbours importance/gender/sex
 - leisure/activities: type? frequency?
- 2.33 formal association/union
 - membership/post in any organisation
 - organised on class/ethnic/gender line
 - activities: leisure? political? social?
 - relations with other organisations? e.g. mainstream unions

3. Attitude and Resistance

3.1 attitude towards mainstream workers and their movement

- 3.11 attitude towards mainstream workers
 - white
 - permanent
 - protected by trade union
- 3.12 attitude towards trade union
 - members: attitude difference in shop-floor/branch/national level?
 - non-member: exclusion or no confidence?
- 3.13 attitude towards other workers' organisations

3.2 attitude towards gender/ethnic/socio-political issue

- 3.21 gender issue
 - workplace: equal opportunities, pay difference?
 - household: patriarchy, house work responsibility
- 3.22 ethnic issue
 - sense of identity: "we" vs. "they"
 - anti-racism and anti-racial discrimination/harassment
 - cultural identity: integration vs. self-identity

3.23 socio-political issue

- “new social movement”: e.g. Green Peace/Third World
- party and non-party politics
- attitude towards socialist ideas

3.3 views and reactions towards policy of state/government

3.31 state's control: institutions and policies

- discrimination by immigration law
- harassment by police
- political inclination: which party? why?

3.32 diminishing state benefit

- unemployment benefit
- housing
- NHS

3.33 increasing tax burden

3.4 resistance and survival strategy

3.41 formal resistance

- formal organisation and actions: e.g. demonstration, petition, strike
- collaboration with unions and other organisations: umbrella group

3.42 informal resistance

inactive' -retreat from selling labour power: become 'economically

- high mobility/turnover
- vandalism/small theft

3.43 survival strategy

- self-help group: economic, social
- informal sector: e.g. moon-lighting, car-boot sale
- create non-market exchange relationship: voluntary

Lists of organisations interviewed

Organisation	City	Target Group(s)	Objective(s) and Major Activities
AEKTA: Clothing Industry Research Project	Birmingham	Clothing Workers in the West Midland Region including both workers and homeworkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve wage and working conditions in the clothing industry • To give confidential advice and information. • To organise campaigns • To do case-work and research.
ASHRAM Community Service Project	Birmingham	Residents in the Sparkbrook district, where many ethnic minorities of Asian origin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A neighbourhood based organisation involved in multi-cultural development work to mobilise local resources in order to develop relevant services. • To promote the use of traditional farming skills and provide homeworkers' support, free legal advice, voluntary work, home safety, credit union, employment advice and counselling.
IWA(GB)	Birmingham	Indian workers (mainly in the West Midlands)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage Indian workers to join unions. • To campaign against racism in union movement and society • To join united front

			actions with other activists groups
Medicare	Leicester	Homeless people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide advice and service to homeless people
Hillfield Centre, University of Warwick.	Coventry	Residents in the Hillfield Area mainly ethnic minority groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide continued education for the deprived groups in the community especially the ethnic minority single parents.
Women's Unit, Birmingham City Council	Birmingham	Women, including ethnic minority women, single parent and home workers in Birmingham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide information and education.

Hong Kong

Organisation	Target Group(s)	Objective(s) and Major Activities
Asian Migrant Workers Social Service Project and Filipino Social Service Project Caritas, Hong Kong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Filipino domestic helpers Thai domestic helpers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide advice and information about the employment rights of migrant workers in Hong Kong. To organise groups and training courses to organise domestic helpers To provide accommodation for domestic helpers who are involved in court case against their employers
Hong Kong Women Workers' Association	Female workers, including full-time, part-time or homeworkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To unite and organise female workers To fight for their rights as both a labourer and a woman To enhance women workers' self development and self-consciousness To make known to the public their needs and problems. Organised and united temporary women cleaners to fight for their rights and benefits. Set up a women printing co-operative in the hope that women workers can have their own career Provide education on gender issues to raise women workers consciousness on their own gender roles.
Neighbourhood Workers Service Centre	Temporary Workers in Urban Service Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organised temporary workers in Urban Service Department to change to permanent staff status.
Industrial Relations Institute	Displaced women workers from manufacturing industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organised displaced women manufacturing workers through retraining and group. Organised a women worker co-op for Chinese typesetting. Campaign about the employment rights of workers

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